HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

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Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen
Memorial Lectures on Comparative
Religion Delivered at Calcutta University

N. K. DEVARAJA
M. A., D. PHIL., D. LITT.
Senior Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy; Director, Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University; Formerly, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad Professor of Indian Civilization & Culture and Head of the Department of Indian Philosophy & Religion, B. H. U., Varanasi, India



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To

Dr. A. C. Joshi

Scholarly Builder of Institutes and Institutions

PREFACE

It was early in October 1965 that I received from the Senate of the Calcutta University an invitation to deliver the Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen Memorial Lectures on Comparative Religion for 1965. The University wanted me to deliver the Lectures orally before committing them to writing, but I preferred to prepare the lectures in writing before delivering them. The lectures could be completed only towards the end of September, 1966, and, owing to the disturbed conditions in the country during the pre-election period, could not be delivered until March, 1967.

The lectures do not pretend to present an exhaustive or detailed survey either of the development and growth or of the contents of the very complex phenomena called "Hinduism" and "Christianity"; what they may claim to offer is a critical perspective for the study of the main tenets, dogmas and attitudes of the two religions. The author does not feel apologetic either for his humanistic leanings or for his critical attitude towards religious dogmatism. However, he claims to be second to none in his solicitude for the specifically religious values, e.g. detachment and holiness. He believes that these and other religious values are pre-eminently displayed in the lives of the saints belonging to different religious traditions; the so-called religious doctrines are useful and significant only to the extent to which they furnish a rationale or rational basis for those values. Further, the applicability and effectiveness of these doctrines, according to him, are directly proportional to their capacity to answer to the demands of man's developing sense of evidence and his growing awareness of the historical manifestations of the finer religious attitudes. The claims and counter-claims of the various revelations or so-called revealed doctrines can ultimately be settled only with reference to man's reason and experience. Nor can there prevail any real conflict between experience and reason, for the latter is but an instrument of conceptualizing and ordering the former. Even the "transcendent", if it is to make any sense to and impact on us, must be comprehensible in terms of our experiential (realistic) imagination and reason.

According to the present writer Comparative Religion is a philosophical discipline specifically concerned to analyse the cognitive, affective, and volitional attitudes embedded in different religious traditions with a view finally to evaluating them. Viewed in this light, Comparative Religion may be regarded as an extension and testing ground of the Philosophy of Religion.

I am grateful to the authorities of the Calcutta University for having appointed me Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen Memorial Lecturer for 1965, thus providing me with an opportunity to organise my thoughts on Comparative Religion in general and two major religious traditions in particular. I have profited from discussions, particularly in regard to different aspects of Christianity, with Dr. R. S. Misra of the Department of Indian Philosophy and Religion, Dr. Altamont Reynolds of Jamaica, who was Research Scholar at B.H.U. during 1965-67, and with several teachers and students in the Department of Philosophy. I take this opportunity to thank them all. I owe special thanks to Dr. Harsh Narain of Lucknow for having taken the trouble to correct some proofs, and to Shri Nand Lal Gupta and Shri D. A. Gangadhar, Research Fellows at the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, for having assisted me in the preparation of the two indexes.

N. K. Devaraja

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.G.	*Bhagavadgītā*
B.S.	*Brahmasūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa
I. Co.	I Corinthians
De.	Deuteronomy
Ep.	Ephesians
He.	Hebrews
Jn.	John
Matt.	Matthews
Mk.	Mark
N.T.	*New Testament*
O.T.	*Old Testament*
Pv.	Proverbs
Ro.	Romans
SP.	Śānti-parva of *Mahābhārata*
Ti.	Timothy
Up.	Upanishad
VP.	*Vishṇu-purāṇa*

I

COMPARATIVE RELIGION

Its Nature, Aim and Method

Religion and the Religions

What is known as religion in different cultures is not a single or a simple phenomenon. Probably there is some element common to all forms or expressions of religion, but it is not easy to isolate and name that element. Several needs and impulses of man seem to be involved in his religious life and its accompanying attitudes. In the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (VII. 1.3.) Nārada entreats Sanatkumāra to 'stear him across (the river of) sorrow or misery'. The motivating force behind Gotama's quest for religious wisdom was his intense sensitiveness to suffering and the desire to be rid of that suffering. Another factor leading to the religious quest, also mentioned in the *Chhāndogya,* is man's resentment in respect of the limitations imposed on him by his finite nature, together with a nostalgic drive towards the Infinite or the Perfect. 'The Infinite alone is (has or contains) Bliss, there is no joy in the small or the limited'[1]. A third impulse seeking satisfaction in religion is the desire for security. This need or desire expresses itself in the demand for an Omnipotent Father or Protector capable of bestowing immunity against death and suffering or punishment. Christianity also includes sin among the phenomena from which liberation or release is sought. The fourth and the lowest motive behind several forms of religious life and worship is greed directed on pleasures and possessions to be obtained and enjoyed in an "other world". The *Bhagavadgītā* (VII. 16) distinguishes four kinds of devotees or worshippers of God, among whom are included the sufferer and the seeker of worldy objects.

Whatever the motivation of religious life, it involves in most cases a

[1] *Chhāndogya Up.* VII. 24.1.

reference to a life beyond the present one. In any case religion implies the quest of a life superior to or more perfect than the life as lived by the generality of mankind. Endowed with a sensitive and highly imaginative nature man feels appalled at the prospect of the continuance of the uncertainties, fears, anxieties, struggles and sufferings of his day-to-day existence ; he also conjures up, in accordance with his taste, temperament and sense of realism, the image or the images of more or most satisfactory forms of life or existence. He also seeks to visualize the means by which those cherished forms of existence may be realized. Needless to say, these imaginings as to the modes or forms of ideal life and the conceptions as to the means of achieving those forms, are being constantly recast and modified by man in the light of his growing knowledge of the factual world on the one hand and his changing, developing sense of values on the other.

Each religion acquires a particular form and learns to emphasize some beliefs, institutional forms and practices consisting of rituals, sacraments, etc., due to several factors. These include the temperament, the physical environment, socio-political history and the peculiar traditions in spiritual life and thought of a community. The religions prevailing in different parts of our planet exhibit a bewildering variety of beliefs and practices. The number of even the so-called higher religions is considerable and the diversities in their doctrines and spiritual practices constitute a challenge to the person who desires not only to obtain an objective understanding of the phenomenon called religion but also to acquire a faith in the religious values. As scholars we may be content to acquaint ourselves with the details about beliefs, rituals, forms of worship, etc., associated with one or more religions, but as human beings we are bound to raise the question : "How much of it all is acceptable and valuable to me ?" Here the pronoun 'me' stands not for a particular person but for each and every honest inquirer and aspirant — the jijñāsu who wants to understand and the sādhaka who wants to attain to or realize the special religious perfection or the religious values. Anybody who approaches the phenomenon called world religions in this spirit of an inquirer-cum-aspirant may claim to be a student of comparative religion.

Fitness to Study Comparative Religion

I have tried to define the spirit in which a true jijñāsu or an honest

inquirer should approach the world religions. In my view it is necessary that we first define the sort of person who is fit to undertake the study of Comparative Religion and the aim or aims with which such a person should proceed in his inquiry, before we can correctly define the nature and method of that young and controversial discipline vaguely called comparative religion.

In seems to me that two sorts of persons need not occupy themselves with comparative religion, the sectarian believer who considers his particular creed to embody the highest and complete truth, and the devout practitioner who finds complete satisfaction in living the faith he cherishes. Any serious study should be pursued with the aim of *discovering* some truth which has previously been unknown or imperfectly known; also, it is to be pursued with the expectation and faith that the discovery of a new truth is likely to be beneficial to the individual investigator and to mankind in general. The sectarian inquirer approaches religions other than his own not with a view to understanding their strong points and benefiting from that understanding, but with the intention of finding illustrations and proofs of the superiority of his faith on the one hand and those of the shortcomings and defects of the rival faiths on the other. Such studies of comparative religion, of which numerous examples can be found in the recent literature on the subject, can have but a limited use both for the scholars concerned and for their readers. At best these studies succeed in shedding new light on the aspects of religious life and thought that lend strength to the religious tradition in which the investigator concerned happens to have been brought up. Most of the Christian scholars with missionary motives, for instance, who have tried to expound Indian religions, have succeeded in accomplishing appreciative analysis only of those aspects of those religions that are in agreement with Christianity. Avowedly committed to sectarian standpoint and standards, these writers have found it difficult to extend their appreciation to the non-theistic and relatively more philosophical traditions in Indian religions. To these writers comparative religion has usually meant comparison of different religions with Christianity taken as standard. Obviously such writers are not likely to discover and appreciate in other religions virtues not possessed by their own creed. Such persons or scholars are not, according to us, suited to undertake studies in comparative religion, in a spirit which is truly objective and broadly impartial.

As for the man of piety and devotion, who is firmly established in his particular faith and is intent on pursuing the highest spiritual life in terms of that faith, there is no point at all in taking to the study of other religions. The institution of a new inquiry is likely to prove to be not only enlightening but also disturbing; it is likely to result, and is expected to result, in a new expansion and growth of the inquirer's personality, intellectual and spiritual. The pious practitioner of a religion does not desire to be disturbed, either in his faith or in his conduct; he can scarcely hope to be enlightened by the knowledge of other religious doctrines and practices. As a matter of fact a truly devout practitioner of a religion lives more in company with his chosen deity or God, than in meditation on the doctrinal subtleties. Such a person is most unlikely to be ever assailed by doubts as to the value of his faith and the way of life it enjoins. The study of comparative religion can hardly be intended for such simple and pure minds.

Who, then, is properly fitted to pursue comparative studies in religion? One essential characteristic of an impartial inquirer is open-mindedness. This necessarily implies that the inquirer in question should be uncommitted to any particular creed or a particular set of dogmas. Insofar as the devout follower of a religion is committed to beliefs and practices of his creed—and he has to be so committed in order to qualify as a truly religious person—he must be deemed unfit for comparative study of religions. Such a study, for him, is unlikely to hold the promise of additional enlightenment or of accelerated growth in piety. If at all, such a person would study world religions only with a view to glorifying his own creed. This, indeed, has been the motive behind the studies of religions other than their own made by missionary writers.

In our view the person eminently fit to pursue comparative religion is a non-committed, or not yet fully committed, jijñāsu or philosopher. Neither the sceptic who is already convinced that religious values are a sham, nor the believer in the exclusive truth or validity of a particular revelation or a particular creed is properly qualified to study comparative religion. A true philosopher who loves knowledge or wisdom above everything else, has the virtue of keeping his mind open up till the last moment of his life, which means that he continues to learn and is willing to learn throughout his life; such a person alone can make a trustworthy explorer of world religions.

This does not imply that a student of world religions, or of any religion, can afford to be insensitive to the specifically religious values. No person who is lacking in aesthetic or literary sensitiveness can fruitfully undertake to study one or other literature. However, if truth about religion, like truth about literature, may at all lay claim to universality in the manner of scientific and philosophical truth in general, then it will have to be conceded that the religious sensibility is potentially present in all human beings. The philosopher who would pursue comparative religion should be able to show not merely that he is not insensitive to religious values, but that he is more sensitive to them than the avowed votaries of the sectarian creeds. Here again it seems desirable to draw a distinction between the devout followers of a creed on the one hand and the philosophical minds born to a particular religion on the other. Some differences between the two may be easily noted. The faithful follower of one or other religion has relatively a simpler mind; he is less inclined to question, and to explore the truth for himself; he is more open to suggestion, less willing to take the risk of unbelief or doubt, and too practical to waste time and energy in weighing alternatives in belief and policy. The inquisitive mind of the philosopher, or the man destined to be a philosopher, is too questioning to be satisfied with the obvious and facile solutions and answers to problems and questions posed by him; he is also quick to discover inconsistencies and contradictions in the statements and beliefs offered for his acceptance. Looking at the matter from a different angle the philosophical minds are not only more restless and critical but also more eager and hungering in respect of relevant perceptions, problems and their attempted solutions. One may engage in the study of world religions not necessarily and primarily because one is interested in discovering the truth about religion; one may approach those religions just to enrich one's perception of different forms or manifestations of the religious spirit or the values realized in religious life. It is for some such reason, conscious or unconscious, that a lover of literature seeks to acquaint himself with literatures—literary classics or writers of classical stature—other than his own. Nevertheless it should be granted that a philosophically inclined student of world religions, like a critical and thoughtful student of world literature, is bound, sooner or later, to find himself involved in judging the relative merits of different aspects of diverse

religious traditions, including religious revelations and their teachings. Pursuing his studies critically and with discrimination, he is also likely to get engaged in ascertaining and applying the criteria of validity or worth in respect of the materials contemplated and scrutinized by him.

Comparative Religion as a Philosophical Discipline

Philosophy, as conceived by the present writer, is concerned chiefly with values. The values that it seeks to analyse and understand are those that are in principle perceivable by all normally constituted and properly trained human beings. Philosophy claims to be an objective discipline, it aims at discovering objective truth. If it be granted that its main concern are the values, then it follows that the values whose nature it investigates are believed by it to be in some sense objective. Philosophy can deal with religion or religious values only to the extent to which those values are or may be made accessible to all normal and competent observers. Philosophy cannot but proceed on the assumption that the spiritual life or the values that it studies are in some sense universally visible and sharable.

Being concerned with values, philosophy can ill-afford to avoid evaluation. Many a Hindu scholar, imbued with the spirit of toleration and synthesis characteristic of Hinduism, has pleaded for according equal status to all religions and religious ways of life. Of the major world-religions Hinduism alone recognizes a plurality of paths leading to an identical goal; it also harbours within its bosom a plurality of faiths or systems of belief. I am not opposed, in principle, to the spirit of toleration and the method of synthesis, but I do not consider these to be a warrant for the refusal to exercise discrimination and choice. Any philosophical discipline worth the name should train our minds to distinguish and discriminate between different orders of validity and different degrees of worth in respect of our beliefs, judgments and practices. The main purpose of philosophy, as I see it, is to train and discipline our sense of evidence and the sense of discrimination—and not to blunt or dull it. A philosophical discourse should result not in the blurring of distinctions but in the sharpening of them. The spirit of synthesis undoubtedly has some use at the level of practical conduct, but even there it needs being informed and regulated by

understanding and discrimination. While the disposition to tolerate and synthesize differences has done some good to Hinduism by fostering unity among diverse religious traditions within it, it has, I suspect, also done it considerable harm. While encouraging the Hindus to tolerate and conserve the most extravagant rituals and absurd customs, it has interfered with serious cultivation and diffusion of the sense of distinctions and rational preference ; it has also led to apathy in respect of even palpably evil customs and practices and unwillingness to seek reforms in an active spirit. The Hindu attitude of tolerance towards rival religious creeds, further, has not prevented the latter from submitting it to harsh and uncharitable criticism.[2] Enthusiastic proponents of other creeds have often construed Hindu tolerance as a mark of their weakness or spiritual inferiority ; they have sought to exploit that attitude (which often assumes the form of apathy and indifference even to the need of self-defence or survival) by haranguing against Hinduism before ill-informed Hindu audience and undermining their cultural self-confidence in various ways.[3]

These remarks are not intended to give the reader the impression that I am opposed either to tolerance or the need of legitimate attempts at synthesis. All that I am concerned to emphasize is that the attitude of tolerance and synthesis should not be confused either with intellectual indolence which refuses to see and make distinctions, or with apathy and indifference in regard to inferior attitudes and evil institutions that call for improvement and reform. There is a weightier reason why a nation or an individual should submit to

[2] Speaking of the God Vishnu and the Vishnuites Prof. Archie J. Bahm half-humorously observes : '. . . the omnivorous Vishnu devours all the various gods within his being, including the Buddha and Christ. Thus Hindus have no quarrel with Christians because Hindus conceive divinity as all-inclusive and unlimited in its manifestations. But Christians quarrel with Hindus when they insist that Christ is the *only* son of God and that all other devas are really devils to be avoided and condemned. Having extended a hand of religious fellowship to Christians, Hindus have difficulty comprehending why Christians seem so ungracious rejecting it.' *The World's Living Religions*, Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1964, p. 59.

[3] Gandhi once wrote : 'As I wander about throughout the length and breadth of India, I see many Christian Indians almost ashamed of their birth, certainly of their ancestral religion' ; and he almost implored missionary Christians not to undermine the people's faith. See M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, edited by Anand T. Hingorani, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, pp. 25, 37.

critical scrutiny the faith and institutions that have been inherited. These latter can continue to evoke enthusiasm and influence and shape life only to the extent to which their inner meaning has been intimately understood and realized by the people in general or by the individual concerned. A religious or moral belief which exists merely as a habit fails to operate as a transforming influence in life. Unless a belief is converted into a personal conviction, it can do little to improve an individual's life. In the modern age in particular, when the sensitive individual is exposed to winds of doubt and doctrine pressing from all directions, it is imperative that he learn to use his discrimination and strive to reach reasoned convictions.

Almost all the religions have exhorted men and women to have faith, faith in the peculiar teachings of the religion concerned ; most of them have sought to silence critical questioning and rational scrutiny by denouncing the doubter and the unbeliever. At the same time, the votaries of the different creeds have been only too prone to condemn the beliefs and teachings of rival faiths. The trick might have succeeded in certain ages and with some people ; it may still succeed with the illiterate or semi-educated masses of a country like India, but it is not likely to succeed with intelligent people in the modern age. It is therefore necessary and desirable that the spokesmen of different religions should willingly submit their faiths to critical scrutiny and seek to justify them through appeal to the modern man's reason and his developed sense of values.

To sum up : Comparative Religion, in my view, is a philosophical discipline. It seeks to analyse the contents of different religions from the specifically philosophic standpoint, which is the standpoint of values. Comparative religion aims, or should aim, at analysing and interpreting different faiths with a view to their final assessment and appraisal. It follows that the types of analysis and interpretation that would suit the taste and purpose of a student of comparative religion will be different from those that would satisfy a sociologist or an anthropologist. The former's analyses and interpretations will be normative both in approach and design, while those of the latter will be positive. This will mean in practice that while the sociologists and anthropologists will indifferently describe all the possible constituents of a religious faith and the life inspired by that faith, the student of comparative religion will lay his finger only on those elements in the faith and life in ques-

tion which tend either to contribute to or detract from the excellence of the human mind, human sensibility and human life.

Here a tricky question arises: How or where can an investigator in comparative religion obtain norms or standards that would regulate his analyses and evaluations? And how far can he trust himself, and be trusted by others, to be impartial as between his own and other faiths? Are not the norms adopted by him likely to be conditioned by the culture to which he belongs? The difficulties and dangers besetting comparative studies in religion, indicated by these questions, are genuine, but they are not insuperable. In a way, similar difficulties will arise in the field of any comparative study whatever, not excluding the sphere of such positive disciplines as comparative history. But it may be admitted that the difficulties will be greater in the realm of various value-studies, e.g. comparative literature, comparative jurisprudence, comparative culture, comparative philosophy, etc. It may also be conceded that the danger of partiality in outlook is the greatest in the field of comparative religion, for religion evokes intenser loyalties than even nationalism. Still I believe—and there may be an element of wishful thinking in my belief—that the situation is not quite as hopeless as it appears to be on the first sight.

And here I would allude to another difficulty that will be raised against my definition of the nature and aim of comparative religion. It may be averred that the province of religion is particularly unsuited to the exercise of reason, that deep religious truths are not amenable to rational examination and critical scrutiny, and that the only way to understand and appreciate the truth of religion is the way of intuitive insight and mystical contemplation.

Reason and Rational Criteria in Value Studies

The second objection is based on a supposed duality or dichotomy between reason and intuition and between criticism and contemplation. In my view the alleged dualism or dichotomy is unwarranted. The duality or dualism seems plausible because of the vagueness and uncertain use of the concepts 'reason' and 'rational' on the one hand and 'experience' and 'intuition' on the other. The dichotomy of reason and experience was first propounded by the Greek thinkers Heraclitus and Parmenides and was later

given impressive currency by that great idealist thinker, Plato, who drew a sharp ontological distinction between the realm of ideal realities or Ideas, which could be apprehended through reason, and the world of sensory objects known through empirical experience. The dualism later on manifested itself in the classic epistemological battle between continental rationalism and British empiricism. The great German idealist Kant attempted to effect a synthesis of the two viewpoints. The synthesis has been characteristic of the method adopted by the physical sciences in their investigations. However, the philosophers of science, headed by the logical positivists, have recently attempted to reassert the dualism between reason and experience by declaring rational or logico-mathematical truths to be purely analytical.

In Indian philosophical tradition the dichotomy of reason and experience was never accepted in principle. Logicians and theorists of knowledge here never found themselves divided into opposite camps of rationalism and empiricism. The Indian logicians and epistemologists are unanimous in according to perception or experience the status of being the first and foremost source of knowledge (*jyeshṭha pramāṇa*). However, Indian thinkers recognize experiences other than the sensory ones also, *e.g.* the experience of the *yogin* or the experience of selfhood.

I shall now proceed to state my own view regarding the nature of experience, reason and their inter-relation on the one hand, and the way we come by rational criteria of evaluation in different fields, on the other. Experience, insofar as it relates to real objects encountered by us, is in principle ineffable. The meanings that we attach to words are conventional, and every meaning is a kind of universal. What I and you experience are particular shades of green and red, but what those words convey are not those particular shades but whole families of shades understood each in a generalized sense. I use the word 'green' not with a view to communicating bodily to my hearer the greenness that I have actually sensed—an impossible feat—but with the intention to securing agreement or successful co-operation between myself and my addressee. This co-operation may involve identification or recognition, or displacement, of the object to which greenness is attributed.

This, then, is the function of language or discourse with respect to the objects encountered in experience. It is an instrument facilitating co-ordination of linguistic and other responses among

human beings, thereby promoting common understanding and cooperation among them. Another significant function of language, not unrelated to the first, is to sustain and foster human creativity in various forms. Language enables us not only to name and specify the general characteristics of particular objects given in experience, but also to suggest new conceptual combinations of those characteristics and of the objects and forces exhibiting or embodying the characteristics. Here it may be noted that language can suggest, in the form of hypotheses and theories, schemes and plans, stories, poetic imagery, etc., combinations of concepts and meanings which have no illustrative counterparts in the realm of the given. It happens that man can react to and enjoy himself with the imaginary gestalts of concepts or meanings as well as—sometimes even more than—with actual combinations of objects. Not only that, thoughtful people the world over are found constantly engaged in debating the relative merits of such gestalts belonging to different contexts or universes of discourse. Examples of such debates are legion : questions and discussions regarding the relative merits of different authors and works; hypotheses, theories and interpretations; definitions and conceptions of such entities as God, Salvation, Original Sin, Predestination, Karma, Heaven, Hell, etc.

All use of language involves the use of categorizing reason. At the lower level language abstracts from experience and holds up the abstracted features before us as meaningful concepts. Another, higher-level function of reason is the contemplation and introduction of relations among concepts and conceptual gestalts. These functions of reason are illustrated in the logical operations of various sorts, *e.g.* definition, division, classification, generalization, formation of hypothesis, deduction, reasoning by analogy, etc. In the realm of value studies comparison and qualitative weighing resulting in the expressions of preference are important forms of relational comprehension. Another kind of relations that are contemplated and considered in relation to the value phenomena are those of relevance. Thus, while judging the quality of a poem or play, we seek to discover and see the aesthetic significance of its various constituents. We also investigate the factors that contribute to the depth and power and peculiar greatness of a work of art.

In the sphere of the positive sciences the interconnections of phenomena professedly discovered or uncovered by an hypothesis or reasoned conjecture are tested and verified with reference to

some perceptual and/or practical consequences; in the domain of the value phenomena and their studies the relationships among meanings express themselves generally in perceptions of relevance, adequacy, relative inferiority and preferability. The question, 'how are the criteria of valuation reached in the value studies'? is closely bound up with the question as to how the aforesaid relationships are perceived or cognized. *Prima facie* it seems that, in order to judge the relative merits of two value phenomena, we should already be in possession of certain criteria or model instances where the value under reference is perfectly embodied and fully manifested. But this has not been the case as a matter of history. Historically, our discovery or formulation of standards of excellence is subsequent to our perception of differences in worth. Indeed, the members of a community may continue to see such differences and pass judgments in regard to them without feeling the need to formulate intelligible criteria that would explain their preferences. The formulation of such criteria, indeed, lags behind the perceptions of value-differences in the most developed and conscious societies. A further point may be noted here. After the criteria of evaluation have been formulated in a particular age or community, they tend to be used in a mechanical spirit by a section of the intelligentsia and the common people, who now claim finality for those criteria and seek to silence in their name the claim of the new value-perceptions. Often the work of modifying or replacing old criteria can be accomplished only by a powerful genius.

What I am trying to suggest is this: we need not be already in possession of neatly formulated evaluative criteria in order to launch on a comparative study of two or more religions as of two or more art works. What we do need by way of equipment is relatively wider acquaintance with and a developed sensitiveness to the phenomena of religious life and values. Another equally important requirement is openness of mind and impartiality of outlook, with a commitment to truth transcending sectarian loyalties. This last virtue may be difficult to acquire, but it should not be impossible for those who profess to care either for truth or for religious values. More than either knowledge or intelligence, what impartiality of outlook in regard to religious matters requires is moral honesty and moral courage. Such honesty and courage, I surmise, is more likely to be displayed by imperfect believers and by scholars with predominantly philosophical training and

open minds, than by preachers and professors with missionary leanings.

As I have already hinted the awareness of standards grows out of the materials furnished by different traditions themselves in a particular domain of spiritual life. T. S. Eliot has somewhere remarked that all the literature from Homer down to modern times has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. One implication of the observation is that our appreciations and evaluations of different authors belonging to different ages and climes tend mutually to modify one another. I may be an Indian and an admirer of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti ; this need not prevent me from seeing that Shakespeare or Racine is a greater playwright than either Kālidāsa or Bhavabhūti. Likewise, it need not be difficult for me, who happens by birth to be a Hindu, to see and declare that either Buddhism or Christianity score over Hinduism in some respects. The final aim of comparative religion is not the glorification of this or that creed or religious tradition, but the improvement of man's religious sensitivity and the furtherance of his pursuit of the specifically religious values.

Relevance and Limitations of Factual Studies of Religion

Here a note may be added on the importance and limitations of purely factual studies of religion, conducted by such disciplines as anthropology and sociology. Factual studies are in general considered, and rightly, to be safer than evaluative studies. Two points, however, deserve notice in this connection. First, in the domain of the human studies, no approach or investigation can honestly claim to be completely free from valuational considerations. The very process of *selection* involved in the perception and recording of the data is, in the last analysis, evaluative. Schrödinger has argued that even in the field of the physical sciences human temperament has a decisive role, restricting as it does the investigators' minds to but a few of the innumerable possibilities in experimentation and to but a few of the multitude of data made available by the experiments.[4] For obvious reasons, the temperament of the investigator is likely to exert far greater influence on his researches relating to human activities and institutions. Secondly, the purely factual

[4] See, Erwin Schrödinger, *Science and Human Temperament* (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1935), pp. 69-70

approach, to the extent to which it is capable of being adopted, is likely to prove more fruitful in the fields where numerical results or quantitative conclusions are aimed at. Such approach, we contend, is as unsuited to the sphere of religion as to that of art and literature. The worth of a Shakespearian sonnet can not be properly assessed by counting the heads of those who have read it and enjoyed it in various degrees ; even so, the worth and relevance of a religious belief can not be assessed or proved by counting the number of people subscribing to it, nor of a religious ritual by ascertaining the frequency with which it is practised. This is not to suggest that the knowledge of the facts about a religion is undesirable or useless for a student of comparative religion ; the facts, however, are important mainly as vehicles of the expression of cognitive and practical attitudes. In particular, a student of religion or comparative religion should fix his attention on the historical facts concerning the development and expressions of various attitudes in belief and piety associated with the religion or religions under study. The historical approach to the facts in question may also help the investigator to isolate and set apart the relatively more enduring or recurrent attitudes embedded in a religious tradition. In the subsequent lectures it will be our endeavour to briefly expound "Hinduism" and "Christianity" with reference both to their historical growth and development and to their logically more important constituents in cognitive, affective and volitional attitudes.

II

PHILOSOPHIC HINDUISM

HINDUISM is the most complex of the major religious traditions of the world. In its broadest meaning Hinduism includes not only the numerous sects and sub-sects that have appeared within its fold from time to time and have either willingly agreed to be called parts of it or have been historically forced to be absorbed in or assimilated to it—sects and creeds associated with the names of such teachers and saints as Gorakhanātha, Rāmānanda, Kabīra, Dādū, Nānaka, Dayānanda, Rāmakrishna Paramahansa, Rādhāswāmī, etc., and those deriving from the various Āgamas—but also the heretical creeds of Buddhism and Jainism. The complexity of Hinduism is reflected in the bewildering variety of beliefs and dogmas comprehended within it on the one hand, and innumerable forms of worship and ritual prevailing among the Hindus on the other. There is hardly any religious belief or attitude that has been unknown to Hinduism, and some of the attitudes and even beliefs have been peculiar and exclusive to it. Hinduism has conserved, as probably no other higher religion has done, the most primitive forms of belief and worship. On the other hand it has evolved and elaborated the most metaphysical and abstruse forms of religious faith and attitude. Hinduism, therefore, offers a challenge, unparalleled in its magnitude and complexity, to the historians and sociologists of religion on the one hand and to its philosophers on the other. Indeed, it may be asserted without any exaggeration that to understand Hinduism is to understand not a particular religion but the phenomenon of religion as a whole. The bewildering variety and complexity of attitudes, cognitive, affective and volitional, which, in all their interrelations and interactions, characterize Hinduism, make it well-nigh impossible to define it, or even to describe it in a brief paragraph. The situation makes Hinduism eminently liable to misrepresentation and

misinterpretation at the hands of unfriendly critics belonging to more limited and therefore more neatly formulated religious traditions.

According to one western author there are five historical stages in the development of Hinduism, viz: Vedic Hinduism, Brāhmaṇic Hinduism, Philosophic Hinduism, Devotional or Sectarian Hinduism, and Reformed Hinduism.[1] Speaking in a broader and more general manner we may distinguish three distinct forms of Hinduism which have acted and reacted on one another throughout its history. These are: *(1)* Brāhminical Hinduism which derives from the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas and is continued through the Śrauta and Gṛihya Sūtras, the Smṛitis and the Purāṇas; *(2)* Philosophic Hinduism, which originates in the Upanishadic period and is nourished by the Upanishadic teachers, teachers of Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Jaina and Buddhist thinkers of pre-Christian millennium on the one hand and by the authors of the various philosophical Sūtras and their commentators and subcommentators on the other; and *(3)* Devotional Theism which originated as an alternative reaction to Brāhminical religion of ritual and sacrifice in post-Upanishadic period near about the time when the original *Mahābhārata* including the *Bhagavadgītā* was composed, developed through several Āgamic traditions, and had its golden age during several centuries following the advent of Rāmānuja and the appearance of Rāmānanda and other teachers of the path of Devotion.

We are not concerned here with exact chronological determination of the appearance of the different tendencies in Indian religious thought, nor are we concerned with establishing relative priority of the so-called Vedic and Non-Vedic traditions. As regards the philosophical tradition in Indian religions, it seems to have originated more or less at the same time both in the Vedic and in the Non-Vedic circles. The Upanishads, the earliest of which go back probably to the eighth century B. C., constitute an internal revolt against the gross excesses of the sacrificial cult; this revolt assumes the form of a sensitive quest of the Infinite *(bhūmā)* through knowledge; it also expresses itself in the attempt to give an inward meaning and direction to religious rites and practices. Thus, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (III. 16-17) declares

[1] See article on Hinduism in *An Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Vergilius Ferm, The Philosophical Library, New York, 1945.

that 'man himself is *yajña* or sacrifice', and works out the analogy of life to sacrifice in detail. Man's life is divided into three periods each of which is compared to a stage or *savana* in a sacrifice. The first twenty-four years of life constitute the morning *savana*, the remaining part of life constituting the other two *savanas*. Each period is presided over by a particular deity or set of deities. The *Kaṭhopanishad* (III. 13) recommends that the man of understanding should merge his speech in the mind, the mind in the intellect, the intellect in *mahat* or *buddhi* and that in the placid *Ātman* or Self. The *Muṇḍaka Up.* (I. 1.7) deprecates the cult of sacrifice and compares sacrifices to frail boats which are powerless to take man across (the ocean of) old age and death. The *Kena Up.* (II. 5) avers : 'If one attains knowledge here, then one's life is meaningful ; if not, it is a great calamity'.

The philosophical creed of Jainism, which rejected the authority of the Vedas and belief in a creator God or First Cause, arose among Śramaṇa circles distinct from the priestly followers of the Vedas. While Gotama himself had no connection with the Śramaṇic order and was born in a family of Kṣatriyas following Vedic Hinduism, his followers later on came to be identified with the Śramaṇic order as contrasted with the Vedic community. The Buddhist tradition generally refers to the followers of the Vedic religion as Brāhmaṇas and the rest as Śramaṇas or Samaṇas. The expression frequently used is, '*Śamaṇā vā Brāhmaṇā vā.*' According to the tradition preserved in Tamil literature, referred to by Pt. N. Aiyaswami Sastri, 'Śramaṇa represents three sects, viz : Aṇuvādins (Pakudha Kāchchāyana's Sect) Ājīvikas (Ājīvakas), and Jains. The Buddhists are spoken of separately as Sākyas.'[2]

The philosophical creeds of India have but a few things in common by way of belief or intellectual faith. Two well-known tenets that characterize all philosophical religions of India consist in the beliefs in final emancipation and in the law of *Karma*. The doctrine of reincarnation may be considered to be an aspect of the law of *Karma* itself. Faith in the possibility of *Mukti, Moksha* or *Nirvāṇa* constitutes the pivot of India's philosophical religions or religious philosophies, as the principle of *Karma* does of her moral philosophies. Belief in a God conceived as either the creator or maker of the world — it may be noted here — is not so central

[2] Vide, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I (1958), "Śramaṇa and Non-Brāhmaṇical Sects", p. 389.

to these philosophies. There are varying conceptions of *Moksha* or emancipation to be met with in different Indian philosophies; their conceptions of the mechanism whereby transmigration of souls and the fruition of *Karma* take place show considerable variations; still these two dogmas, as conceived and propagated by different religions, agree in broad essentials. All teachers and their interpreters, e.g., are agreed that liberation or *moksha* involves transcendence of *Saṁsāra* consisting in subjection to repeated births and deaths; *Karma* and transmigration similarly connote a common core of meaning including, among other things, the impossibility of escape from the fruits of one's *Karma*, good or evil. Before we proceed further in our delineation of the Indian philosophical creeds, it will be useful to make some observations on these two fundamental tenets.

The Law of Karma

The beginnings of the law of *Karma* may be seen in the Ṛigvedic conception of *Ṛita* which connotes order or orderliness, and came to mean physical order in nature as well as the moral order governing human life. Belief in transmigration gradually emerged, in the Brāhmaṇic and the Upanishadic period, as a corollary of the principle of *Karma*. The belief in question is found clearly stated in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, the *Chhāndogya*, and the *Kaṭha* Upanishads. In the Chhāndogya (V. 10.7) it is stated that those whose conduct is agreeable or righteous obtain birth as Brāhmaṇas, or Kṣatriyas or Vaiśyas, while those whose conduct is ugly or unrighteous may be born either as animals or as outcastes. This conception of the operation of the law of *karma* seems to derive from man's instinctive demand to see the evil-doers punished. So insistent is this demand that the theistic systems the world over assign the task of rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked to God himself. The need or demand for appropriate recompense for deeds done by a man later on gave rise to the moral argument for the existence of God. The argument is elaborated by the Naiyāyikas like Udayana, and is used by no less a philosopher than Kant in justification of his faith in a ruling Providence.

The notion of an Omniscient God keeping records of the doings of countless men and women, if not also of other creatures inhabiting countless worlds, is, philosophically, naive and inelegant. It is likely to have appeal for relatively simpler minds accustomed to

the monarchical form of government and the feudal societies. Moreover, this view of the operation of the law of *karma*, can suit only those religio-philosophical systems that believe in God. That is why the atheistic systems of Jainism and Buddhism tried to evolve more intricate and subtler conceptions of the mechanism whereby good and evil deeds bear fruits. The mechanism in question has to be so conceived as to account for the phenomena of transmigration also. We shall not dwell here on the Jaina view of the matter which is rather involved and metaphysically cumbrous, but we shall briefly allude to the Buddhist conception, which is also shared by some Hindu thinkers.

The anticipations of the more sophisticated Buddhist view concerning both the way in which actions bear their fruits and the mechanism of transmigration are to be found in the Upanishads themselves. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* deals with the matter at length in several sections of the fourth *Brāhmaṇa* of Chapter IV. In the earlier sections the phenomenon of transmigration is mentioned and explained with the help of illustrations. In Section 5 we read :

> 'Such is this *Ātman*, identical with *Brahman*; it consists of *Vijñāṇa* (consciousness), *manas* (internal organ of attention and ascertainment), vital breath, eye, ear; of earth, water, air, ether; it consists and does not consist of *tejas* (fire); it consists and does not consist of desire, anger, moral merit. . . as it acts so it becomes; doing good it becomes good, doing evil it becomes evil . . . so it is said that this *Purusha* consists of *kāma* or desire; as it desires so it wills and decides, as it decides so it acts, as it acts so it reaches or collects.'

Here two important points have been stressed. First, a man attains the fruits of actions in accordance with the moral quality of those actions; secondly, the attainment of the fruits concerned is an automatic process. In the next section it is suggested that, owing to the presence of desire, the *Purusha* or the individual soul again comes back to this world; and that the soul which is without desire ceases to migrate.

This latter idea is fully developed in Buddhist accounts of transmigration, rebirth or the birth of a new person or phase of personality — whatever the description that would be truly appli-

cable to the very complex and subtle Buddhist view. No less a scholar than T. W. Rhys Davids emphatically asserts that transmigration of souls 'has never been found mentioned at all, or even referred to, in the Pāli Piṭakas'.[3] Buddha certainly talked of men's previous existence, but that hardly implies faith in the transmigration of souls. 'What the Buddha did teach', according to this scholar, 'would be better summarised, if we wish to retain the word transmigration, as the transmigration of character'.[4] Rhys Davids suggests that the word transmigration be dropped altogether when speaking of Buddhism and that the doctrine be called simply the doctrine of *Karma*. If ever the Buddha referred to past lives it was due to his desire to make himself intelligible by adopting the idiom or modes of speech then prevailing. In other words, the Buddha was trying simply to put his new wine in the old bottles.

Like the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad,* the Buddha held craving or desire (tanhā) to be at the basis of our activity or actions, craving itself being rooted in ignorance. Man alone is responsible for his ignorance and craving, and for the deeds proceeding from them. 'Beings, monks, are responsible for their deeds, heirs to deeds, having deeds for matrix, deeds for kin, to them the deed comes home again. Whatsoever deed they do, be it lovely or evil, they become its heir'.[5] The Buddhist doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda,* in its original form, affirms the prevalence of strict causation in the moral-psychological realm called the being or continued existence of the human personality. Buddhism was not interested in affirming and expounding the principle of causation in its application to the physical world. However, insofar as the causal principle determines the spiritual quality of man's life, as also his weal and woe, its insistence on it is no less strict than that of the physical sciences on mechanistic determinism in nature.

As regards the kind or quality of the next phase of life it depends on the sort of craving or desire that a creature has at the time of transition from the preceding birth or phase of life to the next.[6]

[3] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Indian Buddhism* (Williams and Norgate, London etc., 1891), p. 91.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[5] A. K. Coomarswami and I. B. Horner (ed.), *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha* (Jaico, 1956), p. 204.

[6] See Rhys Davids, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

I have dwelt on this particular doctrine of Buddhism because it subsequently became part of the general body of religious doctrine in India. The *Bhagavadgītā* (VIII. 6) accepts and expresses it in the following words : 'O Son of Kunti, thinking of whatever object one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone he attains—as that object had ever engaged his thought.' The recognition that one's cravings and desires (*tanhā*, *kāma*) and the deeds resulting from them determine the course of one's life including its moral or spiritual quality, happiness and misery, is a far cry from the simple-minded prejudice that we need a force outside the individual, an omniscient and omnipotent God, for effecting the fruition of actions performed by the individual concerned, in the form of punishments and rewards.

Whether or not Buddhism believed in the transmigration of the soul, the Hindus certainly believed in it. The notion that the soul's birth in a particular species is conditioned by the desires or passions that had dominated its life in the previous existence, is found expressed in several important works of later Hinduism. Thus the *Vishṇu Purāṇa* (II. 13) recounts the story of a certain king Bharata who, though a man of great piety and a great devotee of Vishṇu, could not attain *moksha* because of his infatuation, developed in later life, for a young deer whose mother had died and whom Bharata had reared up in his hermitage out of compassion. On account of that infatuation, the sage king had to assume the form of a deer in the next birth. Having, however, remembered the pious life that he had led in the earlier birth, and also the episode of his passionate attachment to the young deer, he was able, by living his life in a holy spot, to secure his next birth as a Brāhmin, which finally enabled him to win his salvation. The story has been related in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (V. 8-9) also.

The Concept of Salvation

The above account of the way in which our actions bear fruits and drive us on to future births or to the continuance of the cycle of life, leads us logically to the peculiar conception of *Mukti* or deliverance entertained by philosophic Hinduism. Here again, we have to reckon with a popular notion of the phenomenon called release or *Moksha*, and the more sophisticated conception built up by the philosophers. Popularly speaking, *Moksha* consists in getting rid of the round of deaths and births to which the individual

soul or psyche is supposed to be subject; philosophically, however, *Moksha* consists in the transcendence of the state of *Saṁsāra.* This *Saṁsāra* consists in subjection to cravings and passions and their inescapable results or consequences, i. e. sufferings and limitations of various sorts. This *Saṁsāra* can be got rid of only by eradicating the causes that lead to it. According to Indian philosophers, including the Hindu and the Buddhist philosophers, the state or phenomenon of *Saṁsāra* is due to ignorance. Ignorance or distorted vision leads to the emergence of cravings and passions, and these in their turn induce distorted vision. It is a general conviction with Indian religio-philosophical writers that only the passionless sage, who is free alike from attachment and aversion, is fit to have an unclouded vision of truth or the true nature of things. Only such sages, it is widely believed, have the capacity to know *dharma* in its true nature which, therefore, can be rightfully expounded by them alone. As regards the question, 'which comes first, ignorance or the passions and cravings ?' the usual reply is: it is impossible to determine the priority of the one or other of these two factors, for the phenomenon of their mutual conditioning is something to which no definite beginning can be assigned. This is the answer of Buddhism, it is also implied in the Vedāntic conception of *Māyā* which is regarded as being a positive, beginningless entity. However, both the *Avidyā* of the Buddhists and the *Māyā* of the Advaita-Vendāntist can be terminated, insofar as they affect the individual, by philosophical knowledge or wisdom. The *Yoga-Sūtra* includes *avidyā* among five *kleśas* and declares it be at the root of all other *kleśas.* Here, the word *kleśa* is construed by the *Bhāshya* as meaning wrong or distorted cognition. The *Yoga-Sūtra* (II. 5) offers a descriptive definition of *avidyā* as follows: 'It is the apprehension of the non-eternal as eternal or imperishable, of the impure as pure, of the painful as pleasurable and of the non-self as self.'

The *Nyāya Bhāshya* maintains that *mithyājñāna* (wrong knowledge or ignorance), produces attachment and aversion which lead to activity; this activity, by producing merit and demerit, becomes responsible for repeated births and deaths. Hence, emancipation can be brought about only by right knowledge through destruction of wrong knowledge or *avidyā.*

After this general introduction to the subject of emancipation, I shall now proceed to offer some comments on the implications of

the philosophical doctrine of *Moksha*. These comments will have reference first to the realistic and then to the idealistic Schools of Indian Philosophy.

(*1*) We have already remarked that all the philosophical schools are agreed in regarding the factor of ignorance or wrong knowledge, and the fact of the involvement of creatures in *Saṁsāra*, to be beginningless. Realistic schools of Hindu thought, i. e. the Sāṅkhy-Yoga and the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika, conceive *moksha* or *apavarga* to consist in absence of pain or suffering. Upanishadic texts in some places aver that the self or *Ātman* is blissful in nature. According to above thinkers the statement can only mean that pain is foreign to the true nature of the self, or that the state of *moksha* is characterized by the absence of pain. Another point on which the Hindu realist schools are agreed is that the state of liberation involves complete severance of relation between the soul and the physical universe. The universe continues to exist as it is; only, it ceases to affect the soul that has been liberated. In the state of liberation the original, unsullied nature of the soul, so to say, is restored to it ; the soul does not suffer any sort of addition or improvement through the process of liberation. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeshika the soul in the state of bondage is liable to have added to it, as it were, by the relation of *samavāya*, the qualities of consciousness, desire, and aversion, volition, pleasure and pain, merit and demerit. These qualities do not, properly speaking, enter the soul and affect its true being ; they only get related to it by the relation of inherence. According to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga also, pleasure, pain, etc., and cognitive and other mental states in general, directly affect the *buddhi* only, and not the *Purusha*. In fact, the Sāṅkhya-Yoga is inclined to conceive bondage and liberation to be merely phenomenal appearances, and not realities as regards their association with the *Purusha*.

(*2*) The idealistic systems of Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as the Advaita Vedānta are, on the whole, inclined to take a more positive view of the state of *Nirvāṇa* or *Mukti*. They tend to identify it with the experience of uninterrupted peace and happiness. This, however, is a relatively minor point. The more important implications of their conceptions of *Nirvāṇa* and *Mukti* are metaphysical, i.e., ontological and epistemological. While in the realistic schools *mukti* is conceived as consisting in the severance of the soul's connection with the material world, in the idealistic

schools the disconnection virtually implies the negation, or annulment, of empirical experience and the phenomenal world.

This last statement needs elucidation. In the Advaita Vedānta, which is probably the most clearly formulated of the major idealistic systems of India, and is therefore relatively easier to comprehend, Ultimate Reality is identified with *Ātman* or *Brahman*, one without a second. In the Upanishads, on the whole, the cosmic and concrete causal character of *Brahman* has been emphasized. True, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Up.*, in a well-known passage, describes the *Brahman* negatively thereby emphasizing its *nirguṇa* character; it is also true that the *Chhāndogya Up.* declares effects to consist merely of names and forms; still it cannot be maintained that the Upanishads teach or contain the doctrine of *Maya* in an articulate form. But that again is not an important point in the consideration of the philosophy of Advaita. That philosophy, as elaborated by Śaṅkarāchārya, is partly an interpretation and partly extension and amplification of the suggestions contained in the Upanishads. The *Māyāvāda* of Śaṅkarāchārya identifies liberation or *moksha* with (the manifestation or reassertion of) the true nature of the self, and declares the world to be an appearance due to primordial nescience Liberation can be brought about by knowledge alone which latter consists in the destruction of *adhyāsa*. This *adhyāsa* is nothing but the fact of the self's mistaken identification with the non-self; it is the illusion of the self's being subject to suffering and finitude, which are actually foreign to its real nature. Liberation is nothing but the removal of this illusion or *adhyāsa*. This state of liberation can be enjoyed by the wise sage even during his lifetime on this earth. The possibility of such liberation called *Jīvanmukti* is a cardinal principle of the Advaita Vedānta. At one and the same time the wise liberated sage both lives in the world and does not live in it. While seeming to belong to the world he is not actually in it or of it. Disowning the fortunes of body and mind, he refuses to be disturbed by any and every happening in the world. The Vedāntic ideal of the *Jīvanmukta* has been perfectly described in the *Bhagavadgītā* where the liberated sage has been called by the title *Sthitaprajña*, i.e., the man of poised understanding or unperturbed mind.

The *Gītā* ideal of the *Sthitaprajña* is cherished by all the classical systems of Indian thought, Hindu and Buddhist. The notion of

Jīvan-Mukta is accepted by Sāṅkhya-Yoga[7] and also by Mahāyāna Buddhism.

This brief account of the Advaita Vedānta should prepare our minds to comprehend the meaning and significance of the great Mahāyāna systems. It is probable that Śaṅkara had been influenced by the tenets of Mahāyāna Buddhism through Gauḍapādāchārya, reported to be his grand teacher. Gauḍapāda, the author of the *Kārikās* on the *Māṇḍūkya Up.*, occupies a middle position, both chronologically and doctrinally, between the Śūnyavāda of the Mādhyamikas and the Advaita of Śaṅkara. It may also be remembered that the idealistic systems of Buddhism are not, insofar as their religious implications are concerned, too far removed from the so called realistic systems.

The teaching of the Buddha, as preserved in the Pāli Tripiṭakas, emphasizes the doctrine of *anattā* or soul-lessness. This soul-lessness is affirmed with reference to the entire world supposed to consist of objects. In plain words, Buddhism absolutely denies the existence of substantives or objects. There are no static objects either in the physical or in the psychical realm. In Abhidharma philosophy the world is dissolved into *dharmas* or elements which have but a momentary existence. The *Abhidarmakośa* distinguishes seventy-two conditioned *dharmas* and three unconditioned *dharmas* (i.e. ether, and two kinds of *nirodha* one of which is *nirvāṇa*). Since both selfhood and the objects of the world are appearances projected by the imagination, there is no sense in having either attachment or aversion to them. The perception of objects including the self (*Satkāyadṛishṭi*) is *avidyā* or ignorance *par excellence*, and liberation can be attained only through the destruction of this ignorance. Needless to say, the destruction of the illusion of objects will be followed by the disappearance of attachment and aversion which lie at the basis of our involvement with *Saṁsāra*. To rid oneself completely of the illusion of fixed objects and thereby of involvement in the realm of the conditioned *dharmas* is to ascend to the plane of the Unconditioned or *Nirvāṇa*. The Unconditioned is reached through the total negation of the things of the world as generally apprehended. The Unconditioned or *Nirvāṇa* is nothing

[7] cp. *pañca-viṁśati-tattvajño yatra-kutrāśrame vasan, jaṭī muṇḍī śikhī vā'pi mucyate nātra saṁśayaḥ*—quoted by Gauḍapāda in his *Bhāshya* on the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, Introduction.

other than the state of absolute peace following upon the disappearance of attachment, aversion and their effects.

The idealistic systems of Buddhism go a step further in the rejection or negation of the empirical world. The realist schools, while denying the existence of objects, had yet clung to belief in the actuality of the momentary *dharmas*; the Mahāyānists do away with this belief also. The elements are no more real than the objects. The older Buddhists conceive the elements to have *causal efficiency* which, according to them, is the defining characteristic of reality. But how can the momentary elements, argues the Mādhyamika, have any sort of activity ?[8] The Mahāyānists believe that Buddha's teaching about *dharmas* was a concession to the popular mind, or the mind of the common man, who can not comprehend the higher truth of the *Sūnyatā* or voidness of all things. Here we may allude to a notion widely current among Indian religious thinkers. They believe that there are different grades of persons as regards their intellectual ability and spiritual competence. Consequently, all human beings are not fitted to receive and appreciate all sorts of doctrines and spiritual teachings; nor can they usefully pursue the same pathway to God or liberation. This view is technically known as the doctrine of grades of spiritual competence (*Adhikāribheda*); it tends to make the Indian mind hospitable to variety of religious doctrines and forms of worship. Shri D. S. Sharma refers to another such doctrine as characteristic of the Hindus, namely the doctrine of the chosen deity (*Ishṭa-devatā*), which means 'that, out of the numerous forms of Supreme Being conceived by the heart of man in the past and recorded by the scriptures, the worshipper should be taught to choose that which satisfies his spiritual longing and to make it the object of his love and adoration'.[9]

The Mahāyāna thinkers differ from the so-called realistic Hīnayāna philosophers in three important respects, i.e., in their treatment of the empirical or phenomenal world, their conception of *Nirvāṇa*, and their ethical ideal of Bodhisattva-hood. Presently we shall be concerned with the first two conceptions. Both the Mādhyamikas and the Yogāchāras have strong leanings to dismissing the world as a vast illusion. Even according to the realistic

[8] *asthirāṇām kutaḥ kriyā*, quoted in *Pañjikā* on *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, IX. 6

[9] *The Basic Beliefs of Hinduism*; (Y.M.C. A. Publishing House, Calcutta, 1955), "The Nature and History of Hinduism", p. 5.

schools of Buddhism, as we have seen, objects as such have no existence. The physical world as it seems to flicker in our everyday experience is an illusory appearance. The Mahāyāna philosophers prefer to use the word *Śūnyatā* or *Śūnya* (i.e., voidness or void) to indicate the status of the empirical world. The import of the term *Śūnyatā* has been differently understood by different scholars. According to Dr. S. N. Dasgupta Śūnyatā connotes essencelessness; according to Stcherbatsky, it means or implies relativity. As a matter of fact, the two concepts tend to be identified in the writings of the Mahāyāna philosophers. Says Nagārjunā: 'we give the name *Śūnyatā* to that which is produced through causes and conditions'.[10] Commenting on this Chandrakīrti observes that any production that depends on causes and conditions, is not a production determined by the object's own nature. This sort of production, undetermined by the own nature of objects, is called *Śūnyatā*. He supports this view by two quotations, one from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, and the other from a different source, both supposed to be words of the Buddha himself. The implication is that the objects of the world do not exist in virtue of their respective essences; their existence is merely phenomenal. This phenomenality is technically known as *Śūnyatā*. This conclusion is reinforced by both the Mādhyamikas and the Yogāchāras by the dialectical treatment of empirical objects and categories. This dialectical treatment assumes different forms in the writings of different philosophers. Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakaśāstra* illustrates at length how the various empirical categories can be dialectically discredited and dissolved. Thus, in the very first *kārikā* of this work, Nāgārjuna examines the various senses in which the possibility of production may be conceived; he is finally led to dismiss all those possibilities, thereby arriving at the startling conclusion that there can be no objects produced either out of themselves, or out of other entities, or from a combination of the two alternatives. Since the objects or their appearances can not be comprehended intellectually, those objects should be regarded as unreal or void. This realization of the voidness of objects leads to the dissolution of the *saṁsāra*. Says Chandrakīrti: 'For him who has realized the falsity of all *dharmas*, for him how can there be any actions or *saṁsāra*?'.

[10] *M.M.K.* XXIV. 18.

Much in the same vein, and in a similar manner, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, too, declares all entities to be essenceless. Buddha is made to observe: 'O Mahāmati, all entities are essenceless, Why? Because, since it is impossible to determine the particular and common nature of objects through reflection by the intellect, all *dharmas* are declared to be essenceless.'[11] And again: 'they (i.e., entities or objects) are taught as being unspeakable (or undefinable) and essenceless because their essence cannot be known through delineation by the intellect.'[12] The *Laṅkāvatāra* is considered to be a source-book of the Yogāchāra school. Later Vijñānavādins analyse the empirical world into the objects and their experients (*grāhya* and *grāhaka*), and seek to dissolve them through dialectical treatment. This treatment, too, has a religious motivation. In his introduction to the commentary on the *Triṁśikā* of Vasubandhu Sthiramati observes:

> ... the exposition of the non-substantiality of objects (*pudgala*) and elements (*dharmas*) aims at the destruction of coverings or hindrances constituted by the *kleśas* (passions and afflictions) as well as by obstacles to knowledge of the knowable. Thus (it is well known that), *kleśas* consisting of attachment, etc., arise out of the perception of selfhood (substantiality or objectivity, i.e. objects). The realization of non-substantiality of things being opposed to the perception of objects, tends to destroy that perception and thereby removes the *kleśas* (attachment, etc.). Similarly, the cognition of the unreality of *dharmas* or elements, which is opposed to the tendencies (consisting in the habits of intellectual discrimination) which cover the real nature of the knowable, leads to the destruction of the hindrances to knowledge. The purpose of the destruction of these (two kinds of) hindrances is the attainment of emancipation and omniscience.

There is a saying that, even though varied, the teaching of the Buddha is identical inasmuch as it consists of the doctrines of *Śunytā* and non-duality (*advaya*).[13] This means that the doctrine of the voidness of the empirical world of objects and that of non-dual character of ultimate reality or *nirvāṇa* is acceptable to practically

[11] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (The Mithila Institute, Darbhanga, 1963), p. 47.

[12] *buddhyā vivicyamānānāṁ svabhāvo nāvadhāryate tasmād anabhilapyās te niḥsvabhāvāś ca deśitāḥ*

[13] *Ibid.*, 48., *bhinnā 'pi deśanā' bhinnā śūnyatā' dvaya-lakshaṇā*

all the systems of Buddhist thought. According to the Sautrāntikas represented by the logicians Dignāga and Dharmakīrtti, the objects revealed in determinate perception are constructions of the knowing mind and so do not belong to the realm of the real. The real, both according to the Mādhyamikas and the Yogāchāras, excludes plurality. The experience of plurality is bound up with the perception of selfhood or the notion of the self. This tenet, again, is common to all the schools of Buddhism. Thus, we read in the *Bodhicharyāvatāra* (VIII. 134-135) :

> Whatever mischiefs are in this world and whatever pains and fears, they are all due to acceptance or belief in self; so, what use is it for me to cling to or cherish this self? It is not possible to get rid of pain without abandoning the self, just as it is not possible to avoid burning without abandoning fire.

This Buddhist insistence on the doctrine of no-self seems to present a full-fledged contrast to the Vedāntic stress on the reality of the self. Here at least the Advaita of Śaṅkara seems to differ radically from the doctrine of the Buddhists. In elaborating his non-dualism, Śaṅkara was drawing upon the Upanishads where *Ātman* is considered to be the highest category. Actually, however, the difference between the two doctrines is more of terminology than of spirit. The Advaita Vedānta declares the visible world, including the empirical self which is equivalent of the five *skandhas* of the Buddhists, to be *mithyā* or phenomenal; the Buddhists likewise declare it to be *Saṁvṛiti-sat*, which has actuality only on the practical plane.

Their conceptions of *tattva* or ultimate reality are also very similar, if not identical. The ultimate in both the doctrines is non-dual and devoid of distinctions; in both, again, the final goal of *mukti* or *nirvāṇa* is conceived as being identical with ultimate *tattva*. The Advaitin denotes ultimate reality by the term *Ātman* or *Brahman*, the Buddhist uses a number of terms to indicate it: Essencelessness, (*niḥsvabhāvatā*), voidness or *Śūnyatā*, suchness or *tathatā*, *bhūtakoṭi*, *dharmadhātu*, etc.[14] In Mādhyamika system, the term *Śunyatā* is applied both to the phenomenal world and to ulti-

[14] See *Pañjikā* on *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, IX. 2. (Mithila Institute edition, p. 171). The text runs thus: *sarva-dharmāṇām niḥsvabhāvatā, śūnyatā, tathatā, bhūtakoṭiḥ, dharma-dhātur ityādi paryāyāḥ.*

mate reality; the Yogāchāras reserve the term *Śunyatā* for the phenomenal world and prefer to call ultimate reality *Vijñaptimātratā*, a term which reminds us of the description of *Brahman* as *Prajñāna* or *Jñāna* in the Upanishads. The Avaitins prefer to characterize *Ātman* or *Brahman* as eternal and immutable; the Vijñānavādins, however, would not risk applying these or any other epithets to their *Vijñaptimātratā*. The Mādhyamikas, too, consider it impudent to seek to characterize the Ultimate. That is why they find it possible to say: We have no thesis of our own to defend. But this posture of the Mādhyamika is a sham, and is highly deceptive. As a matter of fact, he is one with the Advaita-Vedāntin and the Vijñānavādin in holding the ultimate to be distinctionless and fundamentally ineffable or unspeakable.

Both the Buddhists and the Vedāntists are agreed that the empirical world of distinctions is a projection or creation of our minds operating under the influence of beginningless ignorance or nescience (*avidyā*). The Advaita-Vedānta hypostatizes this ignorance as a positive principle called *Māyā*, which, in the context of Hindu thought, serves the same purpose as the *prakṛiti* of the Sāṅkhyas. This gives the Advaitin the advantage of concreteness as regards the explanation of the phenomenal world; his *naming* the ultimate principle of his system as *Brahman* also gives him advantage over the more consistent Mādhyamikas, who refuse absolutely to characterize their *tattva* or *nirvāna*. The Buddhist idealists attribute the appearance of the world to *avidyā* and/or *Vāsanā* or *Trishṇā*. Says the *Laṅkāvatāra*: '*Trishṇā* is the mother and *Avidyā* the father of all beings.'[15] To the modern mind, the Buddhist view of how the world exists for us appears to be less metaphysical and more empirical than that of the Vedāntists.

Both the Mahāyānists and the Vedāntins aspire to rise above all distinctions, to become indifferent to all appearances based on distinctions, and to finally detach themselves from the transient affairs of the mundane world. Buddha in one place is reported to have observed that thought or consciousness is far less enduring than the body: 'Monks, this body is seen enduring for one year, for two years. . .for a hundred years and even longer. But this, monks, that is called thought, and mind and consciousness, this by night and day dissolves as one thing and reappears even as an-

[15] *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, pp. 56-57.

other.'[16] This view, which is thoroughly Humean, seems to be diametrically opposed to the Vedāntic doctrine of the self as an enduring entity. The Buddhists recommend the practice of Yoga for the realization of the fleeting character of self or consciousness. Both the Buddhists and the Vedāntists, however, are agreed that the aspirant after liberation should eschew selfish involvement in the affairs of worldly existence.

Identity of Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa

Some of the Buddhists, particularly the Mādhyamikas, have also propounded the startling and seemingly paradoxical thesis that *Saṁsāra* and *Nirvāṇa* are one and the same. As a matter of fact, this doctrine is a logical extension of the concept of *Jīvanmukti*. *Mukti* or *nirvāṇa* is not a hypothetical state to be accepted on faith ; it is a state which can be realized or enjoyed here in our day-to-day existence. In China and Japan this view of *nirvāṇa* culminated in the doctrine of Zen. The Advaita Vedāntin also believes in *Jīvanmukti*. The *Gītā* (V. 19) states : 'Even here they have conquered *saṁsāra*, whose mind is stationed in unified vision'.[17] But the radical identity of *saṁsāra* and *muktī* is more thoroughly asserted by the Mādhyamikas. 'There is not the slightest difference between *nirvāṇa* and *saṁsāra*,' says Nāgārjuna in his *Madhyamakaśāstra* (XXV. 20). Prajñākaramati, in his *Pañjikā* on *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, elaborates the thesis as follows : 'All entities (*Padārthas*) bear both the natures (i. e., the phenomenal and the noumenal). Of these, that which is perceived by the ignorant is called *Samvṛitisatya* (phenomenal reality or truth) ; and that which is the object perceived by the right-minded who understand reality, is called *paramārthasatya* (ultimate reality or truth). This is the view of those who understand the doctrine'.[18] Here the author quotes a verse from Chandrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* which conveys exactly the same idea. The significance of these statements is that wise people, who understand the nature of reality, are already aware of the Ultimate lying at the basis of the phenomenal world. This Ultimate is the real in its true nature, involving no distinctions and

[16] A. K. Coomarswamy and I. B. Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

[17] Likewise Śaṅkara states : 'Thus it is proved that the wise man is disembodied (i. e. liberated) even when he is alive.' *Bhāshya* on *B. S.* 1. 1. 4.

[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

lying wholly beyond the categories of thought and understanding. Says Śāntideva : 'The real is beyond the reach of the intellect, the intellect (i. e., intellectual knowledge including its objects) is known as *Saṁvṛiti*.[19] Elsewhere it is observed : 'How can there be any hearing or teaching of the reality which is beyond words ? It is heard and talked about in virtue of superimposition (*samāroha*)'.[20] The wise man looks upon the fleeting appearances of things as illusory ; they do not seem to him to be actually there. He is aware of the abiding reality on which those appearances have been projected or superimposed. This is exactly the vision that inspires the life of the Vedāntic sage. Stationed in *Brahman*, he views the objects of the world as a succession of so many mirage-like appearances.

Doctrine of Liberation : Some Implications

Here I would like to comment on some important implications of the Indian doctrine of liberation. In the classical systems liberation is not conceived as consisting in the attainment of a state or perfection lying outside the individual's soul or self. What *Mukti* or *Nirvāṇa* actually implies is the removal of the veil of ignorance, which conceals the true nature of the self. This true nature is variously conceived by realistic Hindu systems on the one hand and by Advaita Vedānta and the Buddhist philosophical schools on the other. According to the Mahāyāna Buddhists *nirvāṇa* is identical with Buddha nature or suchness hidden behind the world of appearances ; according to Advaita Vedānta it is the *Brahman* or *Ātman* on whom the material world has been superimposed. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeshika and Saṅkhya-Yoga, however, *Moksha* consists not in the dissolution of the empirical world, but in the severance of the soul's connection with that world. But all these systems agree that liberation does not imply acquisition by the self of anything lying outside its own nature. Among the classical systems the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika alone recognize the existence of God and also attach a special status to him. The Yoga God has hardly any functions allotted to him with respect to either the physical world nor individual *Purushas*. The important thing to notice is that *neither the Purusha of the Yoga system nor the soul of the*

[19] *Bodhichryāvatāra*, IX. 2.
[20] Quoted in *Pañjikā*, p. 176.

Nyāya-Vaiśeshika retains any communication with God in the state of Moksha. The liberated soul is perfect without having had anything added to it from out of the perfection or excellence of God.

This leads us to observe another important aspect of the Indian conception of liberation and how it can be attained. Here *Moksha* or liberation is achieved through knowledge, and the acquisition of knowledge depends primarily on our own effort. The souls in the Hindu systems of thought, even in the theistic systems, are conceived as being eternal entities, not subject either to birth or to death. The Buddhists, the Jainas and the Sāṅkhyas do not believe in God at all; the Yoga God seems to be altogether indifferent to both *Prakṛiti* and the *Purushas*; the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika God, while having nothing to do with the being of the souls, is merely a maker of the physical world and not its creator. This recognition of the eternal character of individual souls bestows on them a peculiar status and dignity which cannot be theirs in the (non-Indian) theistic creeds where God is looked upon as creator both of the physical world and of the spiritual beings or souls. To this must be added the fact that the souls or selves in classical Indian systems can attain salvation through their own intellectual and moral endeavour.

That man can liberate himself through his own exertions is repeatedly emphasized by Indian philosophers. Even the *Bhagavadgītā* which lays great emphasis on devotion and also preaches the doctrine of grace, remarks in one place (VI. 5) in truly classical spirit: 'One should uplift oneself by oneself, and not permit oneself to sink down; for *ātman* or oneself alone is one's friend, and oneself alone is one's enemy.' The Buddha's exhortations to self-effort and self-dependence are well-known. Some of these are:

> Oneself is the master of oneself (*attā hi attano nātho*); oneself is oneself's destiny (*attā hi attano gati*); let your selves be as islands (i.e., independent entities),[21] be your own refuge, don't have any other refuge (*attadīpā viharata, atta-saraṇā, anañña-saraṇā*); etc.

The Ethics of Philosophic Hinduism

A religious attitude should justify itself rationally and ethically.

[21] Some scholars render '*dīpā*' as 'lamps'; they translate *atta-dīpā*, etc. as 'be your own lamps'. Actually, *dīpa* here is equivalent to *dvīpa*, an island.

The religious ideal preached by the philosopher-sages of India was sought to be justified by them on the basis of their complicated metaphysical systems or world-views. Though differing among themselves in ontological and epistemological details, these systems agree in denying ultimate value to empirical existence and to living in relation to the empirical world. In this respect, the idealistic systems of Buddhism and Advaita-Vedānta are more self-consistent than the realistic Hindu systems. In the context of Hindu thought the Vedānta may be looked upon as giving a more coherent philosophical setting to some of the insights of the Sankhya teachers. Purely on the basis of Nyāya-Vaiśeshika and Sānkhya metaphysics, it is difficult to see *why* the religious man should be so averse to involvement with empirical reality; the idealistic systems furnish a thoroughly rational basis for such an attitude towards the world and its objects.

The next important question is: do these systems justify themselves from the standpoint of moral and cultural values? Here we shall be concerned to deal only with the first part of this question.

There is a sense in which the sphere of religion and the realm of morals may be considered as distinct. Religion, it may be held, concerns man's relation with God or the Ultimate, while ethics or morals are concerned primarily with man's relation with his fellow-beings in society. On the one hand thinkers like Kant and writers like Matthew Arnold tend to identify religion with morality; on the other there are writers who see no relationship whatever between the two. Thus, Kellett observes: '. . . in almost all nations, till comparatively recent times, that which all are agreed to call religion had little or nothing to do with morality; and often the first step in the construction of ethical systems was to denounce the current religion as at best non-moral'.[22] Kellett refers to Greek philosophers, Xenophanes, Socrates and Plato, who are 'full of censures of immoral tales told of the Gods and heroes whose altars crowded every town in Greece'.[23] Whatever the truth about the primitive religions, wherein the ruling instincts in the worshippers of God or gods were fear and the desire for worldly benefits calculated to assist in the struggle for existence, there can be no doubt that higher religions have advanced the

[22] E. E. Kellett, *A Short History of Religion*, (Pelican Books), 1962, p. 9.
[23] *Loc. cit.*

cause of civilized living by encouraging the sentiments of justice and benevolence. In the Indian tradition, shortly after the Vedic-Brāhmaṇic period, ethics or the teaching of morals became closely associated with religion. Stress on virtuous life is characteristic of several Upanishads; it becomes still more prominent in the teachings of Jainism and Buddhism. As regards the virtue of non-violence it was emphasized not only by the latter two creeds, but also by the two sects of the worshippers of Vishṇu-Nārāyāṇa-Vāsudeva (the three deities that came gradually to be identified), i.e., the Bhāgavatas and the Pāñcarātras, that probably arose shortly after the emergence of Buddhism.

The virtue of *ahiṁsā* or non-injury has been emphasized by teachers of *dharma* in the non-philosophical contexts also. In the Śānti-parva of the *Mahābhārata* it is said : 'That is *dharma* which is associated with non-injury; the teaching of *dharma* is intended primarily for preventing injury to living beings.' (Ch. CIX. 12). It may be noted that the Indian manuals of *dharma* enjoin non-injury in respect of *all* living creatures. In the Upanishads we find great emphasis being laid on truthfulness. But in the Śānti-parva we read : 'The truthful speech is commendable, more commendable is the speech calculated to do good; in my opinion, that is truth which is of greatest benefit to living beings'. (Ch. CCCXXIX. 13). The duty to seek the well-being or good of others is recommended with respect to all living beings. Explaining the nature of *dharma* to one Jājali, Tulādhāra observes: 'One who is ever a friend of everybody and is always engaged in doing good to others by action, mind and speech—he alone knows the nature of *dharma*'. (SP. CCLXII. 9). The virtue of forgiveness is closely related to the practice of *ahiṁsā* or non-injury and is frequently recommended in the *Mahābhārata*. Forgiveness, again, presupposes the power or capacity to control anger.

The above are some of the cardinal virtues recognized by the *Mahābhārata*. As already observed, the Upanishads attach special importance to truthfulness; they also emphasize the virtue of self-control. In the opening verses of Chapter XVI the *Bhagavadgītā* enumerates a score of qualities that characterize men belonging to the "divine order". These include: fearlessness, purity of disposition, steadfastness in knowledge and meditation, charity, self-control . . . non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity of mind . . . compassion to living beings . . . vigour,

forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of malice and of excessive pride. According to Manu, *dharma* consists in the practice of ten virtues which include: patience, forgiveness, self-control, cleanliness, cultivation of intellect and wisdom, truthfulness, and absence of anger.

It is not our purpose here to enumerate all the moral qualities that have been named and recommended by the epics and the authors of the dharmaśāstras. What interests us are the *reasons* put forward by Indian philosophers in defence of the more important or cardinal virtues. What the classical Indian philosophers are mainly concerned to emphasize are the virtues of selflessness and detachment. Detachment towards the objects of the world arises out of the realization that one's true self stands nothing to gain from its association with, or possession of, those objects. The Saṁnyāsin is required not to have possessions of any kind, since attachment to mundane pleasures and possessions is the cause of bondage. In fact, according to Śaṅkara, such detachment is a necessary precondition of the desire to inquire into the nature of *Brahman.* The Advaita-Vedānta distinguishes between the real and the empirical self and exhorts the aspirant after perfection not to identify himself with the latter. Buddhist thinkers, on the other hand, dissolve, through analysis, the very notion of selfhood, which to them is at the root of all the evils. It is attachment to the self that leads us to develop negative sentiments, such as hatred and hostility, towards other living beings. It is interesting to compare the logic used by the Advaita-Vedānta on the one hand, and the Buddhist philosophers on the other, against the dispositions of hatred, enmity, etc. In the *Īśa-Upanishad* (6-7) we read: 'He who sees all the creatures within the *Ātman* and the *Ātman* within all creatures—he renounces hatred. Where all the living creatures become *Ātman* to the wise, then, to him, who sees unity, how can there be any delusion or depression ?'

Here again, the idealistic systems of Advaita-Vedānta and Buddhism are able to furnish better reasons for shedding off selfishness and looking upon other creatures exactly as upon oneself—thereby avoiding any partiality for one's own self—than the realistic Hindu systems. To the question, 'why should I be unselfish or not self-centred ?' the Advaita reply is: because there is no distinction whatever between the real self that is you and the real self that informs the being of other creatures. This is a convincing

reply in terms of the basic presuppositions of the Advaita Vedānta. Equally convincing is the reply of the Buddhist in terms of his presuppositions. He says in effect: Since there is no abiding entity called your own self, there is no point in being partial to yourself; one should be impartial as between the so-called one's own self and the so-called other selves. 'Fear and pain are as repugnant to others as to me; what is, then, special to myself that I should seek to protect it and not others?'[24]

The Upanishads, as Prof. Hiriyanna observes, 'are not interested in traversing the entire field of ethical training. They presuppose a certain moral equipment in the Vedāntic initiate and proceed to explain the course he had to pursue thereafter.'[25] This is also the case with Hindu philosophical writers in general. Sureśvara remarks in the *Naishkarmyasiddhi* (IV. 69): 'In one who has attained self-knowledge qualities like lack of hostility appear without any effort on his part; they are not practised as mere means.' The idea is that, to the man of knowledge, the virtues such as lack of pride and non-hostility, come naturally; he continues to practise them automatically after enlightenment has been achieved. The Mahāyāna Buddhists also consider *prajñā* or metaphysical insight to be the highest and the foundational virtue which lies at the root of all the other virtues. Says Śāntideva: 'The Buddha has elaborated all this group of virtues just for the sake of *prajñā* or insight; therefore, the person who wants to eradicate misery should seek to arouse *prajñā*'.[26] Elsewhere it is stated that 'insight or *prajñā* is attended by all the other moral perfections (*pāramitās*) even as the digit of the moon is attended by the stars, (i.e., the lesser luminaries)'.[27] In other words, these thinkers thoroughly believed in the Socratic dictum that 'virtue is knowledge'.

In his *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, Āchārya Śantideva has delineated and pleaded for the practice of the higher moral virtues called the *pāramitās* in a most thorough and persuasive way. The practice of the virtues of charity, forgiveness, energy and enthusiasm in the cause of moral self-perfection, *dhyāna* or meditation, etc., are

[24] *yadā mama pareshāṁ ca bhayaṁ duḥ-khaṁ ca na priyam; tadātmanaḥ ko viśesho yat tam rakshāmi netaram. Bodhicharyāvatāra,* VIII. 96.

[25] M. Hiriyanna, *The Quest After Perfection* (Mysore, 1952), p. 6.

[26] *Bodhicharyāvatāra,* IX. 1.

[27] *Prajñā-pāramitā-stava,* 8 quoted in *Pañjikā* on IX. 1 (above).

looked upon both as being instrumental in the production of *prajñā* or wisdom, and also as being the manifestations in conduct of the wisdom that has been attained. The more prevalent view is that the practice of the virtues called *pāramitās* constitutes the means (*upāya*) which helps the aspirant to attain the goal of *prajñā* or wisdom. The metapysical insight into the non-dual nature of things can take the form of a firm conviction only when it is preceded by the practice of selflessness on a large scale. In Ch. VIII called *Dhyānapāramitā* (the Perfection of Meditation) Śānti-deva stresses the point that all pains, fears, etc., arise from the notion of selfhood which therefore is the greatest of our enemies. The wise man should give no encouragement whatever to this notion. 'He who wants quickly to save himself and others, he should engage himself in the secret practice of exchange of self with others.'[28] Śāntideva offers persuasive arguments for shedding attachment for the self. This self which

> in order to combat physical weakness, hunger, thirst, etc., kills birds, fish and the beasts and obstructs (the movements or activities of) others; which would kill even parents for the sake of gain and honour . . . which wise man would cherish such self, protect it and respect it, and not look at it rather as an enemy? . . . if I give away (something), what shall I eat or enjoy myself? . . . this is behaving like a fiend for the sake of the self; if I eat or enjoy, what shall I give (to others)? . . . this is behaving like the king of gods for the sake of others. Inflicting pain on others for the sake of the self, one (qualifies oneself for and) gets tortures in hell; having put oneself to trouble for the sake of others one obtains all the blessings. Whatever when indulged in for the sake of one's own progress leads to evil, low position and foolishness; the same, being transferred to others (i.e., having been practised for the sake of others) leads to beneficial end, good conduct and wisdom. When one orders others for the sake of the self, one becomes a slave (in the next birth); but when one orders oneself for the sake of another, one attains lordship. Whosoever are unhappy in this world are so because of this concern with their own happiness; whoever are happy in this world are such because of this concern with the happiness of others.[29]

[28] *Op. cit.*, VIII. 120.
[29] *Loc. cit.*, (VIII. 122-129).

According to Mahāyāna Buddhists even the Bodhisattva who has already attained wisdom continues to work for the benefit of the rest of the creation. The Bodhisattva refuses to enter into *Nirvāṇa*, which he now fully deserves, in order to be helpful to beings that are still in bondage. The Indian sages showed their interest in helping mankind primarily by imparting to them saving knowledge or spiritual wisdom. They did not love their own empirical selves, so they could be expected not so much to love the living beings as to have compassion for them. The ruling impulse in the Bodhisattva of the Mahāyānists is compassion for creatures suffering from ignorance and pain. This is not to say that the commandment of love is unknown to and unappreciated by Indian philosophical ethics. The aspirants after perfection were required, both by Buddhism and by philosophical Hinduism, to practise the four virtues called the Brahma-vihāras. These are *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekshā*. According to *Yoga-sūtra*, *maitrī* is the disposition to be happy in the happiness of others ; *muditā* is the disposition to rejoice in the practice of virtue by others ; *karuṇā* or compassion is directed on suffering creatures and *Upekshā* or indifference towards the non-virtuous. This means that the saintly wise man may not harbour the feeling of hostility towards the unvirtuous. The practice of these virtues, according to Patañjali, leads to complete serenity of the mind. According to U. Nu, *mettā* in Buddhism is defined in three ways. It is loving-kindness, friendship or a friend's special property. The disposition implies a friend's concern and consideration for everybody. Distinguishing *mettā* from love Shri U. Nu observes : 'love is associated with desire or passion. Loving kindness is free from such desire or passion. In fact, desire or passion is detrimental to loving kindness.'[30] According to his interpretation *mettā* can dispel vengeance or enmity, extinguish anger and charm others. The man who practises *mettā* is dear to his fellow-men and to gods ; he sleeps and wakes in comfort and has no evil dreams ; the expression of his face is serene, his mind can be quickly concentrated. As he dies with no wandering thoughts he goes to Brahma-loka after death.

In the *Aṇguttaranikāya* (V. 229-301), Buddha is reported as having addressed his disciples thus :

'Monks, that ariyan disciple, who is thus without coveting and

[30] U. Nu, *What is Mettā ?* (Rangoon, 1961), p. 1.

malevolence, not bewildered but self-possessed and recollecting, with a heart possessed of love abides suffusing one quarter of the world, likewise the second, third and fourth quarters of the world, likewise above, below, across, everywhere, for all sorts and conditions—he abides suffusing the whole world with a heart possessed of love that is widespreading, vast and boundless, without enmity or malice.'[31]

Elsewhere the Buddha said :
'There are, monks, these four bases of sympathy. What four? charity, kind speech, doing a good turn, and treating all alike.'[32]

As stated above the Brahma-vihāras are the virtues that contribute to the serenity of mind. Such mind is characteristic of the saintly personage. The Indian national mind was thoroughly sensitive to the charm and fascination of the personality that had attained complete equanimity and quietude in his psychical life. Patañjali remarks (II. 35) that in the presence of the person who has thoroughly realized *ahiṁsā* animals, etc. tend to renounce their feelings of hostility. In his famous epic poem *Kirātārjunīyam* the poet Bhāravi describes the serene charm of the sage Vyāsa who has come to pay a visit to the Pāṅḍavas. The sage 'gave rise to an overpowering feeling of affection in the hearts of even those who did not know him. By his even and modest demeanour he gave expression to the purity and peace of his mind; by his look peculiarly sweet and confidence-inspiring he seemed already to have conversed (with those seeing him)'.[33] Such a personality may be said to be the moral counterpart and effect of the religious life.

This personality is largely a product of the intensely realized metaphysical vision that inspires the philosopher-sage of Indian conception. The vision consists essentially in the absence of the consciousness of duality, or in the awareness of the distinctionless character of the Ultimate. The wise sage views the panorama of the world from the standpoint of eternity; occupying that standpoint he is led to look upon the distinctions that constitute the phenomenal world of objects as virtually non-existent. As Gauḍapāda

[31] A. K. Coomarswamy and I. B. Horner, *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha* (Jaico, 1956), p. 134.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 139.
[33] Canto III. 2-3.

observes, 'that which does not exist in the beginning and also towards the end, that may be taken to be non-existent even in the present.'[34] The objects of the world, being non-existent according to this criterion, fail to disturb the mind of the sage by arousing in him the feelings of attachment, aversion, etc.

Tāntric Philosophy

Here a word may be added about the various Tāntrika cults that developed within both Hinduism and Buddhism. Nāgārjuna had asserted that *Saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa* were one and the same. The Buddhist idealists had denied the reality of all kinds of distinctions. The denial had been shared by the Advaita-Vedāntins. The Tāntrika cults sought to put in practice the feeling of non-duality or the apprehension of the falsity of all distinctions. The Tāntrika Sādhaka or aspirant refuses to accept distinctions drawn by common sense and by social convention. Violent attempts to exercise self-control and to suppress the promptings of the flesh amount, in the last analysis, to the recognition of distinctions which are actually not there. Instead of indulging in such attempts, the spiritual aspirant may as well permit the primitive impulses to run their course unhindered and unsuppressed, assuming all along the posture of a pure spectator. Such an aspirant would seek to rise above the polarities of morally right and wrong on the one hand and those of clean and unclean, physically attractive and physically disgusting, on the other. This attitude accounts for the adoption by the Tāntrikas of some of the practices that appear to be outrageous and revolting to us at the level of common sense and common sensibility. An eminent Swami writes :

> 'The essential thing, therefore, is the recognition of a veiled and 'lost' identity. In Vedānta, the commonest act of perception implies the restoration of a lost identity (as *Chaitanya* or consciousness) between the perceiver and the perceived, *pramātṛi* and his *vishaya*. This essential identity must be worked out consistently and thoroughly, without leaving any precipitate of difference whatever, if the aspirant is to go beyond the plane of duality which has made a *Jīva* of *Śiva*. . . .
> Take for example man and woman. One can be equated with the other subject to certain limits, measures, and conditions.

[34] *Gauḍapādīya Kārikā*, IV. 31.

The polarity, antithesis or difference is patent. We should be able to resolve and get beyond *bheda*. Failing this man and woman will be *pāśa* of each other, as they often are in common experience. But if identity, as distinguished from mere conditional, tentative equality can be affirmed and realized, then the two poles or opposites will resolve into unity and will form one integral whole. The *pāśa*, the noose, then disappears.'[35]

The Tāntrikas opposed the cult of suppression with respect to some of the cravings of the flesh; they thereby anticipated the teachings of psycho-analysis. But their views and practices also implied the overcoming of the natural feelings of disgust in relation to the supposedly unclean objects; here they were doing as much violence to the common sensibility of mankind as the religious teachers recommending complete suppression of the flesh. In a way, the Tāntrika cults effected a *reductio ad absurdum* of the doctrine of non-duality that had been preached by the Buddhist and Hindu idealists of India. These cults constitute a warning against taking any doctrine, however lofty, too literally and too seriously; ultimately it may turn out that the common sense of mankind, at least in respect of the human values, is a more reliable guide than metaphysical speculations, resting on remote and far-fetched assumptions.

[35] Swami Pratyagātmānanda, "Tantra as Way of Realization", *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 232-233.

III

VAISHṆAVISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The religion of Christ has no affinity whatever with philosophic Hinduism, but it bears great similarity to some of the devotional cults of India particularly Vaishṇavism. This does not imply that the devotional creeds here were wholly divorced from philosophical speculations. It was inevitable that the different forms of Hinduism should have acted and reacted on one another. The fact that Rāmānuja, Madhva and other representatives of devotional theism attempted to formulate systematic philosophies testifies to the influence of the speculative environment created by the classical philosophers. Thus Rāmānuja is intensely aware of the system of the Advaita Vedānta as propounded by Śaṅkara and his followers. If he does not betray comparable awareness of Buddhist and Jaina doctrines, it is because the more influential tenets of those doctrines had already been partly disposed of and partly assimilated by the classical Hindu philosophers. Christianity too created philosophical doctrines, mostly theological, in support of its dogmas during the middle ages. The Christian thinkers drew a good deal on Greek thought particularly the systems of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus; likewise, the Indian theistic thinkers such as Rāmānuja and Madhva derived several of their tenets from the Sāṅkhya and the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika schools; they also drew inspiration from the theistic trends in the several Upanishads.

The devotional creeds of India centre largely round the two deities Vishṇu and Śiva. Both these gods are found mentioned in the Vedic hymns. According to some scholars, the worship of Śiva and Śakti had been prevalent in India in the pre-Āryan culture represented by the archaeological remains at Mohanjodaro and Harappā. Vishṇu figures as a solar deity in the Ṛigvedic hymns; there he is held to be distinctly inferior to Indra and Varuṇa as well as to Agni. Later on Vishṇu became identified with Kṛishṇa

Vāsudeva, whose worship had been prevalent among the Vṛishṇis or the Sātvatas, on the one hand, and with Nārāyaṇa, originally described as a Ṛishi, on the other. The *Ṛigveda* makes frequent mention of the three strides of Vishṇu, which are variously interpreted as meaning the three periods of the sun's course, (i.e., his rise, culmination and setting); threefold manifestation of light in the three divisions of universe (viz., fire on earth, lightning in the atmosphere and the sun in the sky); as the earth, air and sky.[1] Later on, in Purāṇic literature, the three strides gave rise to the legend of Vāmana, one of the incarnations of Vishṇu, and Bali, the king of Daityas, whom Vishṇu had sought to misguide and deceive.

The earliest reference to Krishṇa, son of Devakī, and a disciple of Ṛishi Ghora of the Āṅgiras family, occurs in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* (III. 17. 6.). His identification with Vāsudeva was a later phenomenon. Vāsudeva became the founder of the Bhāgavata religion, which is also called Nārāyaṇīya, Sātvata, Ekāntika or Pāñcarātra religion. References to the cult of *bhakti* directed on Vāsudeva are to be met with in Pāṇini's *Ashṭādhyāyī* and the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali. The *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata* constitute the earlier sources of the Bhāgavata religion; the *Vishṇu-purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* are important among the later sources, as also are the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* and the *Śāṇḍilya-sūtra*. Besides these, there are various Āgama works belonging to the Vaishṇava and Śaiva creeds of devotional theism. Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha and Śrī Chaitanya are some of the important Hindu thinkers who elaborated the doctrinal side of Vaishṇavism and gave currency to different forms of devotional worship. But these philosophers are not necessarily the most important exponents and propagators of the devotional cult. Among the philosophers named above Vallabha and Chaitanya are relatively more important than Rāmānuja or Nimbārka, though Rāmānuja is certainly the most eminent among these thinkers. And as a literary source of Vaishṇavism in all its forms the *Śrīmadbhāgavata* has been more highly regarded than any writing by any of the aforesaid philosophers. There are several reasons for this. First, the practising Vaishṇavas have been more interested in the practical rituals associated with their religion than in the doctrinal details; secondly, the *Bhāgavata-*

[1] Vide, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 109.

purāṇa depicts the life of Lord Kṛishṇa which directly interests His devotees. A typical Vaishṇava finds greater spiritual enjoyment and satisfaction in the perusal of the *Śrīmadbhāgavata* in its Śanskrit or vernacular versions than in the reading of philosophical texts by different theistic thinkers. In northern India, those who worshipped Vishṇu in the form of Rāma were similarly attached to the reading of the *Rāmacharitamānasa* of Tulasīdāsa. In the south, the hymns composed by the Vaishṇava saints called the Ālvars have been likewise popular. The writings of these saints are looked upon as having scriptural authority by Vaishṇava philosophers particularly the Rāmānujites.

There are reasons to believe that devotional theism in its beginnings was, like philosophical Hinduism, a reaction against the extravertic cult of sacrifice. Even in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* we find the teacher Ghora repudiating grosser forms of sacrifice and recommending finer spiritual practices instead. The *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, which is noteworthy for its devotional theistic tone, also seems to have little respect for the cult of sacrifice. The *Bhagavadgītā* (IV. 33) attaches greater value to *Jñāna-yajña* (sacrifice in the form of knowledge) than to sacrifice performed with material things. The *Gītā*, an important scripture of devotional-theistic schools, seems to have scant regard for the Vedas that enjoin sacrifices for the attainment of heaven. It describes those who, driven by desires, show devotion to the pronouncements of the Veda as unwise (II. 42). Lord Kṛishṇa proceeds to say: 'The Vedas deal with (the objects consisting of) the three *guṇas;* you, O Arjuna, should go beyond them.' (II. 45).

In other respects, too, devotional theism shows similarity with philosophical Hinduism and was deeply influenced by the latter. Thus, all the spokesmen of the *Bhakti* School deprecate man's involvement in the world and its pleasures, and emphasize the need of self-control. While the theistic philosophers from Rāmānuja onwards concentrate their dialect ical guns against the Advaita of Śaṅkara, the *Vishṇu-purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata* seem to teach a monistic philosophy. It may be noted here that one of the important commentaries on the Bhāgavata is by Śrīdhara, who is a follower of the Advaita-Vedānta. The following extracts from the *Vishṇu-purāṇa* will be seen to attest its monistic leanings; they also testify to its having been influenced by Vijñānavāda:

The Lord is wholly of the nature of knowledge, and not a thing

or substance; therefore, know you all variety of the objects including mountains, oceans and the earth to be manifestations of *Vijñāna* or knowledge. When, after the destruction of *karma*, *jñāna*, free of defects, stays in its own pure nature, then there remain no mutual differences among things, the differences being the fruits of the tree of volition. Therefore, O Dvija, there are no objects whatsoever apart from *Vijñāna* or knowledge; the same *Vijñāna* is experienced in manifold forms by individual minds in accordance with their different *Karmas* (actions bearing moral fruits). One real *Vijñāna*, existent, pure, and sorrowless is free from all kinds of defects such as greed; that is the supreme lord Vāsudeva; nothing except Him exists.[2]

Advaitic doctrines, including a sort of Māyāvāda, are frequently echoed by the *Bhāgavata* also :

'The wise (lit. the knowers of reality) describe that real which is knowledge, non-dual; it is called *Brahman*, *Paramātmā* and *Bhagavān*.' (I. 2. 11).

(Says the Lord:) 'My description as bound or as liberated is due to the (three) *guṇas*, it does not indicate the actual state of affairs; the guṇas are rooted in *māyā*; actually, there is neither liberation nor bondage for me. Sorrow and delusion, pleasure and pain and embodiment all are due to *māyā*; like dream the world, which is unreal, is an appearance to the *Ātman*'. (XI. 11. 1-2).

'Just as the same gold is spoken of differently by people in the practical contexts, similarly the Lord Vishṇu is talked about differently by ordinary people and by scholars of the Veda.' (XII. 4.31).

'Salutation to Him, who by His inscrutable *Māyā* created the *guṇas*, and then, entering them, differentiated them : the great Lord, who constitutes the movement of the wheel of *Saṁsāra*, whose uninterrupted operations are difficult to comprehend.' (X. 29).

The use of the term *Advaya* in the first verse quoted from *Śrīmadbhāgavata* indicates the lingering influence of Buddhist philosophy. However, though the two principal Vaishṇava Purāṇas

[2] *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, II. 12, 39-40, 43-44.

show leanings towards a monistic world-view, their main interest centres round the person of the *Saguṇa Brahman* who is responsive to the call of the devotees. The two most important concepts of Vaishṇava doctrine are God regarded as a Person and *Bhakti* or devotion considered as the norm of relationship between God and man. While the Vaishṇava thinkers accept the traditional law of *karma,* they are yet inclined to believe more in the grace of their Godhead. Nor do they care much for the state of liberation. To them the intoxication of *bhakti,* which is conceived to be an end in itself, is preferable to release or liberation.

The God of the Vaishṇavas is *Bhagavān*, an epithet which implies six perfections. These are complete overlordship, perfect virtue, fame, beauty, knowledge and detachment. He is the inner soul of the universe; all beings reside in Him and He resides in all beings. He knows (about) both the creation and dissolution, coming into being and disappearing of the creatures. He also knows *Vidyā* and *Avidyā,* and is called *Bhagavān* on account of this. Free from defects, the term *Bhagavān* connotes complete knowledge, complete *Śakti* (potency or power to accomplish anything), *Bala* (power to support), *Aiśvarya* (power to control), *Vīrya* (changelessness), *Tejas* (power to subdue or surpass everything).[3]

The above description of God is from *Vishṇu-purāṇa.* Long before that the following description of God had been given in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (VI. 7-9):

'Chief Lord among the lords, Highest among the gods, Master of masters, transcending everything, we know that Deity, King of the world, worthy of praise;
Without body and sense-organs, there is none equal to or greater than Him; His supreme power is varied or manifold; His knowledge, strength and activity are innate;
He is the cause and master of those who own instruments; He has neither a creator nor a master'.

The *Vishṇu-purāṇa* describes God Vishṇu as unchanging, pure, eternal, always maintaining the same form, one with the world. He is also the cause of its creation, maintenance and destruction.[4]

[3] *Ibid.*, VI. 5. 74-75, 78-79. These verses have been quoted by Rāmānuja in his *Śri-Bhāshya,* under 1. 1. 1.

[4] Chap. II. 1. 4.

According to the *Bhāgavata* God creates the world, makes and unmakes things, in the mood of sport or *līlā*: He sports, He makes His Self involve in sport.[5]

The concept of *līlā* as the motive underlying creation is explicitly mentioned by Bādarāyaṇa in the Sūtra II. 1. 33. Commenting on it Rāmānuja remarks: '*Brahman* who by sheer volition brings about creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world, has *līlā* or sport alone as the motive or object.' The same interpretation is given by Nimbārka, and also by Vallabha, who, however, explains the term *Kaivalya* rather differently. It is interesting to note that Śaṅkara too interprets the sūtra along similar lines. Here an objection arises: creating the world in a sportive spirit, why should God permit undesirable differences as regards the happiness, misery, etc. of the different creatures to prevail ?. In reply, the author of the *Sūtras* as well as the commentators all fall back upon the law of *karma*.

The theistic philosophers do not accept the *Māyā* doctrine of Śaṅkara, which makes *Māyā* a synonym of *Ajñāna*, an entity which cannot be described either as real or as unreal. The Vaishṇava thinkers are generally inclined to describe *Māyā* as the power of God. Sometimes it is identified with *Prakṛiti*. The *Śvetāśvatara* states: '*Māyā* should be known to be *Prakṛiti* and Maheśvara as the lord of *Prakṛiti*' (IV. 10). Rāmānuja quotes this line from *Śvetāśvatara* in his commentary on the *Gītā* (VII. 14, and XIII. 2.). The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* alludes to God's power called *Māyā* 'which is both *sat* and *asat*, real and unreal. God creates the world by this power.'[6] Under the sūtra I. 1. 21 in his *Śrībhāshya* Rāmānuja interprets *Māyā*, by which God creates, or transforms himself as, the world, to mean God's volition, which is a form of his knowledge. In support of this interpretation Rāmānuja quotes the Naighaṇṭukas who consider the words '*Māyā*' and '*jñāna*' to be synonymous. In the *Gītā Bhāshya* (IV. 6), he quotes another line from somewhere which states: 'By *Māyā*, He ever knows the good and evil (actions) of the creatures'.

In Vaishṇavism, God comes to acquire several other attributes than those generally mentioned in Upanishadic literature. The most important attribute of or element in *Brahman*, according to the

[5] *Ātmānaṁ Krīḍayan Krīdan—Bhāgavata* (II. 4.7).

[6] *Śaktiḥ sadasadātmikā; māyā nāma mahābhāga yayedaṁ nirmame Vibhuḥ.* (III. 5. 25).

Upanishads, is consciousness. *Brahman* is defined as *Prajñāna,* knowledge or consciousness. *Sat* and *Ānanda* (existence and bliss) are also said to constitute the essence of *Brahman.* When *Brahman* is conceived as *Saguṇa,* power becomes an important attribute. The Vaishṇava God is endowed with qualities which make Him more charming and gracious. In his *Śaraṇāgatigadyam,* Rāmānuja describes *Brahman* or God as 'different from everything else, being of the nature of infinite knowledge and bliss, inscrutable, divine and mysterious, possessed of infinite purity, beauty, delicacy, charm, youth, gracefulness, friendliness, compassion, sweetness, generosity', etc. 'God is the mother, father, kinsman and teacher. He is learning and wealth to the devotee'. Nimbārka, too, attributes sweetness and beauty to God in addition to majesty and other qualities. Nimbārka and his followers seek to direct their devotional attitude on God as possessing the above qualities. In Śuddhādvaita system of Vallabha, *Brahman* is conceived as having three forms. The highest form is known as Kṛishṇa or *Purushottama,* who is full of *rasa* (sweetness) and *ānanda* (joy). *Purushottama* is the *Para-Brahman* or the highest *Brahman.* The second form of *Brahman* is that of *Antaryāmin* or inner-*Brahman* dwelling in the souls. The third form is known as *Akshara-Brahman,* which, appearing as *Prakṛiti* and *Purusha,* becomes the cause of everything.

Before we pass on to the consideration of *bhakti*, the second most important concept of Vaishṇava theism, I would like to note some important points of difference between the philosophical creeds of Hinduism on the one hand and the later theistic creeds on the other.

(1) In philosophical Hinduism, on the whole, the concept of *ātman* or individual self is more central than the concept of God. This is true even of Advaitic literature where the terms *Ātman* and *Brahman* are used more or less synonymously and interchangeably. In the Nyāya doctrine of salvation, too, as we have seen, the individual soul figures more prominently than God.

(2) The theistic systems regard the individual soul as atomic in size. This may be taken to be an indication of the diminished importance of the individual soul. In the classical systems, Hindu, Buddhist as well as Jaina, perfection was conceived as being inherent in the individual's own self; in theistic Vedānta the soul's perfection consists in its union with God. Further, in these latter systems there is continued emphasis on the soul's absolute dependence on God.

(3) This emphasis leads logically to the doctrine of *bhakti* or devotion as the sole means of the attainment of lib ration; correspondingly, there is a tendency to underrate the importance of knowledge.

(4) The advocates of theistic Vedānta are in general opposed to the doctrine of *Jīvanmukti*. This may also be taken to be a corollary of the belief that perfection is extraneous to the soul's own nature.

(5) The theistic Vedāntists, on the whole, have a more positive attitude towards social life and the duties involved in that life. This accords with their devaluation of the efficacy of mere knowledge. Thus, commenting on the verse XVIII. 5 of the *Gītā* Rāmānuja observes: 'the aspirant after *moksha* should never abandon such actions enjoined by the Veda as *yajña* (sacrifices), practice of charity and austerities; on the contrary, he should perform these every day until the time of death. Why? because... actions relating to one's caste and stage of life tend to purify the wise and the thoughtful (lit. those who practice *manana* or reflection)'. Such utterances occur frequently not only in the *Gītā-Bhāshya* but also in other works of Rāmānuja including the *Śrī-Bhāshya* and the *Vedārtha-Saṅgraha*. Nimbārka also requires that an individual continue to perform his caste duties and duties related to various stages of life even after the rise of wisdom brought about by the performance of those duties.[7] Vallabha is opposed to the life of renunciation in the path of knowledge. He says: 'Therefore, in the Kali age, the life of renunciation can lead only to regret or repentance; it also leads to hypocrisy; therefore one should not take to the life of renunciation in (on account of) knowledge'.[8] Commenting on *B. S.* III. 4. 31 Vallabha observes: 'Just as even the man of knowledge during normal times should eat the food offered by good people only, in conformity with the injunction (of the Śāstras), so also he should perform the duties of the *āśrama* because they have been enjoined'.

(6) The theistic philosophers from Rāmānuja onwards are inclined to rely less and less on reason and to appeal more and more to scriptures. The classical philosophers such as the proponents

[7] *Vidyā Sahakāritvenā' pi vividishanti yajñenetyādinā yajñāder vihitatvāt mumukshuṇā' py anushṭheyam.*' (*Bhāshya* on *B. S.* III. 4, 33).

[8] *Ataḥ kalau sa Saṁnyāsaḥ paśchāt-tāpāya nānyathā, pāshaṇḍitvam bhavech chāpi tasmād jñāne na saṁnyaset* (*Saṁnyāsa-nirṇaya*, verse 16, quoted by S.N. Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV. Cambridge, 1939, p. 356).

of Nyāya-Vaiśeshika, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Jaina and Buddhist systems attach greater importance to reason, rational intuition or spiritual experience. Experience remains important with the later thinkers also, but reason is not accorded an important place, particularly in their constructive speculations. Śaṅkara also attaches importance to *Śruti*, but in his writings the role of reason is equally important. He strives hard to give rational appearance to the teachings of the Upanishads. He also attempts to offer some sort of proof for the existence of his first principle, *Ātman* or *Brahman*. On the contrary, Rāmānuja clearly declares that the existence of God cannot be established by *pramāṇas*. Nor does he seem to be worried for having had to take up this attitude in regard to the incapacity of the *pramāṇas*. The attitude is shared by Madhva, Nimbārka and other theistic commentators on the *B. S.* In this respect Vallabha's attitude is still more uncompromisingly orthodox. He says in effect that reason should not be used even in determining the import of the Scripture. Even when the Scripture seems to teach contradictory things about *Brahman* they should be accepted as a whole. There can be no real contradictions in *Brahman*, whose power is unlimited and incomprehensible, and who can assume all sorts of forms.[9] It may be added here that the representatives of theistic Vedānta believe in the authority of not only the traditional scriptures but also several *Purāṇas* and the *Āgama* works.

Bhakti or Devotion

God can be apprehended neither by the senses nor by the intellect. He can be known and attained only through devotion. A vast amount of literature dealing with the cult of devotion exists both in Sanskrit and in different regional languages of India, e.g. Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Bengali, Assamese, etc. The *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Nārāyaṇīya* Section of the *Mahābhārata* are the most important among the early Sanskrit texts. In the *Gītā* are contained almost all the elements of the *Bhāgavata dharma* that was later elaborated in some of the Purāṇas and the theistic Schools. The *Gītā* does not contain any formal definition of *bhakti* or devotion, but it clearly suggests how the devotees should behave in relation to God (and also in relation to the world, as we shall see later). Thus we read :

[9] *Sarva-bhavana-samarthe brahmaṇi bhāvāchcha.* (*Aṇubhāshya* I. 1. 1.).

Ever chanting my names (or contemplating and describing my glories), striving (to attain me) with determination, bowing to me with devotion, they ever contemplate and worship me. (IX. 14).

Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice for Me and make obeisance to Me ; thus uniting yourself to Me and being entirely devoted to Me, you shall assuredly come to Me. (IX. 34).

O Son of Kunti, whatever you do, eat, offer as oblation (to the sacred fire), whatever you bestow as a gift, whatever you do by way of austerities, offer it all to Me. (IX. 27).

Leaving aside all duties or religious practices (recommended by various authorities), seek refuge in Me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins ; grieve not. (XVIII. 66).

I am equally present in all living beings (or, all creatures are equal to me), none is hateful or dear to Me. However, those who devoutly worship Me, abide in Me, as also I abide in them. (IX. 29).

Neither by the study of Vedas, nor by austerity, nor by charity, nor by sacrificial ritual can I be seen in this form as you have seen Me. Through singleminded devotion, however, I can be seen in this form and known in essence and even entered into, O Arjuna. (XI. 53-54).

The first five ślokas describe and suggest how a devotee behaves or should behave ; the last extract indicates God's partiality for the devotee.

The *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra* defines *bhakti* as supreme or surpassing attachment to God.[10] The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra*, another important treatise on devotion, elucidates that concept as follows :

Bhakti is supreme love directed on God. It is of the nature of *amṛita* (nectar or bliss). Having achieved it, man attains fulfilment or perfection and becomes immortal or completely satisfied. Having attained *bhakti* one desires nothing, bothers about nothing, hates nothing; he does not take delight in external objects, nor does he feel any urge. Having known or realized *bhakti* one becomes intoxicated as it were, unmoved and silent, feeling

[10] *Sa parā' nuraktir īśvare.*

delight only in self. *Bhakti* or love of God has no element of desire in it; it is of the nature of *nirodha*, i.e. withdrawal from all forms of action secular and religious. *Bhakti* or devotion is superior even to *karma* (action), knowledge or *jñāna-yoga*, because it is an end in itself. (*Sutras* 2-8, 25-26).

This is almost a mystical conception of *Bhakti*. Nārada goes on to say:

> Divine love or *bhakti* is indefinable in nature. It is like the pleasures of taste enjoyed by the dumb. It is devoid of (definable) qualities, devoid of the element of desire for anything external; it grows from more to more every moment, is without break, and is of the nature of a subtle kind of experience .... There are no distinctions due to caste, learning, external appearance, birth, possessions and occupation among the devotees; for they all belong to Him. (*Sūtras* 54-55).

The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* (*VII*. 5.23) recognizes ninefold devotion, i.e. nine marks or forms of *bhakti*. These are *Śravaṇa* (listening to the name of God or to the episodes about God incarnate); *Kīrtana* (chanting His name); *Smaraṇa* (recollection of Him); *Pādasevana*, *Archana* and *Vandaṇa* (serving Him, worshipping Him, bowing to Him); *dāsya* or servitude; *sakhya* or friendship; and *ātmanivedana* or self-offering. These concepts have been further elaborated by later writers in their treatises on devotion. Jīvagosvāmin, an author belonging to the Chaitanya sect, considers the nine forms of devotion to be so many stages of *bhakti* culminating in self-offering. The *Bhāgavata* gives concrete descriptions of these in various places. Thus, in II. 3.24 it is stated that a person's heart should be regarded as being stone-hard if it does not melt under the recitation of God's names by devotees. Similarly, in I. 5.22 it is said that chanting of God's merits is the consummation of all spiritual efforts. 'One who has dedicated his self to me', says the Lord, 'desires nothing but Me : such a one desires neither the high abode of Brahmā (the Creator) or Indra (the king of gods), nor universal overlordship, nor the powers of a *Yogin*, nor yet emancipation from birth.' (XI. 14.14). In the intoxication of his high-pitched devotion, the devotee exhibits the following marks: 'His speech is convulsive or stammering, his mind or psychic being is

in a state of melting; he weeps often and laughs sometimes; bereft of the sense of shame, he sings and dances. Such devotee of Mine purifies the whole world.' (XI.14.24). In XI.14.20 the Lord is made to say to Uddhava: 'Neither Yoga, nor the way of Sāṅkhya, neither study nor penance nor renunciation wins Me as does the intensity of devotion'.

The Concept of Grace

The germs of the doctrine of Grace are found in the *Kaṭhopanishad*; it is more fully developed in the *Bhagavadgītā*. In the former (I. 2. 20) we read: 'Having abandoned actions rooted in desire, he, free of sorrow, witnesses the greatness of the *Ātman*, through the grace of God (lit. the Supporter)'. And again, 'This *Ātman* cannot be attained by words, by intelligence or extensive study; It can be reached only by one whom It elects; to such a one, the *Ātman* reveals Itself.' Here according to the Rāmānujites the term '*Ātman*' stands for God. In the *Gītā* (XVIII. 66) the Lord expressly exhorts Arjuna to abandon all (ritualistic) activities and seek refuge in Him only. Elsewhere (IX. 22) He declares: 'Those devotees who, constantly and exclusively, think of Me and worship Me—of such, ever united to me, I look after the needs and the security'.

Speaking as a philosopher Rāmānuja defines *bhakti* as constant recollection of God. Such *bhakti* alone constitutes real knowledge and (according to Rāmānuja) is recommended by Vedāntic texts. In any case the knowledge cannot be equated with cognition produced by the comprehension of the meanings of the sentences. In his smaller tracts such as the *Śaraṇāgatigadyam*, however, Rāmānuja gives expression to a more emotional view of the concept of *bhakti*. There he calls God mother, father and teacher as also relative and friend. There he quotes two verses from the *Gītā* (XI. 43-44) where Arjuna describes Kṛishṇa as father of everything unmoving and implores Him to forgive him for his omissions and commissions even as a father forgives his son, a friend his friend and a lover his beloved. This stress on an intimate and human relationship between God and man becomes still more marked in later devotional works, philosophical and literary.

The followers of Rāmānuja developed two conceptions of *bhakti*, one involving personal effort on the part of the devotee and the

other requiring complete surrender to and dependence on God. The former attitude is called *Bhakti* and the latter *Prapatti*. The followers of *bhakti* adopt *markaṭanyāya*. As the young monkey clings to the back of its mother who bears it along, so the devotee exerts himself by performing right actions, etc., and is also helped by God. The advocates of *prapatti* adopt the *mārjāra-nyāya*, i.e. the way of the young kitten, which depends wholly on its mother to be carried along by being seized in the mouth; the devotees of this school depend wholly on God's grace for their spiritual uplift and fulfilment.

The doctrine of Grace is developed by Vallabha under his concept of *Pushṭi*, a term literally meaning the grace or benevolence of God. The scriptures enjoin the path of *maryādā* which involves combination of devotion with action and knowledge; following this path the aspirant gradually attains *bhakti* or devotion towards God. The follower of *pushṭi*, on the contrary, depends wholly on God for his fulfilment. This path transcends the boundaries of the scripturally sanctioned way of life. According to Vallabha *pushṭi-bhakti* is superior to *maryādā-bhakti* and leads to higher fulfilment than the one attained through the former.[11]

God as Saviour

Related to the doctrine of *prapatti* is the Vaishṇava faith in God as Saviour of mankind particularly the devotees. While the philosophers of Vaishṇavism do not explicitly hold that God can be associated with a physical body—witness Rāmānuja's insistence that the existence of God cannot be established by any *pramāṇa* (perception, inference etc.) other than scripture—the saints and popular teachers belonging to that faith attached the greatest importance to the worship of various incarnations of God Vishṇu. Now the main object of an Incarnation is to rescue the righteous and the order of righteousness from powers hostile to them. In the *Gītā* (IV. 7-8) Lord Krishṇa is made to say: 'Whenever there is decline of *dharma* or righteousness and ascendency of unrighteousness, then I assume bodily form. For the protection of the virtuous and destruction of the evil-doers, and for establishing *dharma*, or righteousness, I am born from age to age.' Even apart from the incarnations Lord Vishṇu (as also Lord Śiva, who however never incarnates himself in a visible form on the earth) is described in

[11]See *Aṇubhāhāya* on the Sūtras III. 3.29; IV. 2.4; III. 4.46; and IV. 4.9.

the Purāṇas as being ever on the move for the benefit of those who invoke Him for help in a spirit of devotion. Not that the Lord is literally on the move (though according to Hindu mythology He possesses not only powerful, unfailing weapons but also the swift vehicle in the form of an eagle and also a sort of aeroplane, the *pushpaka*), the idea is that the Lord, being Omnipresent, can appear anywhere when properly invoked. The Vaishṇava Purāṇas are full of stories how Vishṇu came to the rescue of this or that creature who called upon Him in a spirit of utter dependence and devotion. Vishṇu assumed the form of a Boar, when the Earth had to be saved from being sunk into the ocean; and of the Man-lion (Nṛisiṁha), when the great devotee Prahlāda had to be justified in his Faith against his taunting father, Hiraṇyakaśipu. Assuming the form of Rāma He killed the great demon king Rāvaṇa; in the form of Kṛishṇa, He was responsible for the destruction of such wicked rulers as Kaṁsa, Śiśupāla, Jarāsindhu, etc. Lord Vishṇu saved an elephant from the clutches of a crocodile when the former sincerely called for His help. He even went to deliver Ajāmila from the envoys of Yama, when the former pronounced the word Nārāyaṇa which was also the name of his son. Apart from Vishṇu a large number of stories centre round the figures of Rāma and Kṛishṇa, telling how the Lord in those forms saved the life, honour, virtuous way of life, etc. from the threatening posture of this or that wicked and powerful individual. It may be remembered here that, apart from being sweet, charming and gracious the God of the Vaishṇavas is both Omnipresent and Omnipotent; He is thoroughly capable of being aroused to righteous indignation and anger. Not that the Lord is lacking in forgiveness. Lord Kṛishṇa suffered a hundred abuses showered upon Him by Śiśupāla quietly; but when the latter still continued to be abusive, He killed him with a single smooth stroke of his famous disc, the Sudarśana-chakra.

The Concept of Liberation

According to theistic Vedānta as represented in the various commentaries on the *B.S.* liberation consists in some sort of association with Godhead and in the enjoyment flowing from that association. Rāmānuja and Nimbārka seem to recognize only one kind of liberation but Madhva and Vallabha distinguish several kinds of *Mukti* or fulfilment. According to Madhva liberation is of

four kinds, *Sālokya*, *Sāmīpya*, *Sārūpya* and *Sāyujya*. *Sālokya* is residence in the same place as God where the sight of God is constantly available. *Sāmīpyā* implies still greater nearness to God. *Sārūpya moksha* has a still higher rank and is enjoyed by God's attendants, who resemble Him in their outward forms. The highest kind of liberation is *Sāyujya* which involves the entrance of the liberated soul into the body of God and its participation in God's own blissful life.[12]

According to Rāmānuja and Nimbārka liberation consists in the attainment of *Sāyujya* with God. The liberated soul participates in the auspicious qualities of God including omniscience and bliss. But such a soul does not enjoy the functions of creation, etc. in relation to the universe; these functions belong exclusively to God.

We have seen that Nārada and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* conceive *Bhakti* or devotion to be an end in itself. There is no substantial difference between this view and the views of liberation propounded by theistically inclined philosophers. Association with God, involving loving contemplation of Godhead, is the most important element in the various forms of liberation as conceived by the aforesaid philosophers.

The Ethics of Vaishṇavism

The moral teaching of the Hindus centres generally round the concepts of *varṇa* or caste and *āśrama* or stage of life. The term *karma* refers mostly to the duties relative to caste and stage of life; renunciation of *karma* also means the giving up of the above duties. There is a sense in which ethical life is conterminous with social life. But virtuous life or the practice of virtues may very well go beyond the requirements of social living. As early as in the age of *Manu-Saṁhitā* it was believed that the Saṁnyāsin (recluse or mendicant) transcended the duties relative to *āśrama* or stage of life. But this did not mean that the Saṁnyāsin transcended the moral order in the sense that he was no more required to practise virtues. Those scholars who have interpreted *Jñānamārga* (the path of knowledge) as implying transcendence of ethical life in this latter sense have been clearly misrepresenting Hindu religious thought. The truth is that the mendicant or the Bhikshu practises the higher virtues of truthfulness, non-violence or non-hostility and

[12] See, S. N. Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV (Cambridge, 1949), p. 318.

forgiveness on a much larger scale than what is possible for a man living as a member of society.

The Vaishṇava writers in general are more inclined to attach value to social action and social morality than the classical philosophers of religion particularly the Advaita-Vedāntins. Thus, following Manu the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* (VII.15.47) recognizes two kinds of action—*pravṛitta* and *nivṛitta* (action done with desire for fruit and that done without such desire purely in a spirit of duty respectively) — and avers that while the former results in repeated births, the latter leads to immortality. In so many words it condemns the *gṛihastha* who abandons actions, calling him a vile exemplar of the *āśrama* (VII.15.38-39). The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* (12-13) expressly enjoins that 'the injunctions of the scriptures should be scrupulously respected, even after one has decided on the course of *bhakti;* otherwise there is risk of a fall.' The emphasis on continued action without desire for fruits laid down in the *Bhagavadgītā* is well known. Commenting on the *Gītā* (XVIII. 5.) Rāmānuja unambiguously declares: 'The aspirant after *moksha* should never abandon such actions enjoined by the Veda as *yajña* (sacrifices, probably the daily sacrifices), practice of charity and austerities; on the contrary he should perform these everyday until the time of (final) departure. Why ? because . . . actions relating to one's caste and stage of life tend to purify the wise and the thoughtful'. Following the *Gītā* Rāmānuja states elsewhere (*B.G.* III. 20) that 'even for one fitted to pursue the *jñānayoga,* the path of action is superior to the path of knowledge'. Here it may be added that many authors on *bhakti*, including the authors of *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa,* agree in holding that when a person's devotion reaches the stage of intoxication, social action ceases to be binding on him. Vallabha who is generally opposed to the life of renunciation in *Kali* age, permits renunciation for those swayed by intensity of devotion to God.

For the attainment of *bhakti* Nārada recommends the following measures : reflection on the (teachings of) devotional scriptures; actions calculated to arouse devotion to be performed; non-injury, truth, cleanliness or purity, compassion, etc. to be practised and faith cultivated (Sūtras, 76-78). In one place (IV. 29.49) the *Bhāgavata* gives a new meaning to action: 'that is action proper which pleases God, that is *vidyā* or science which gives understanding of God'.

The devotee's love of God is reflected in all his actions. The *Vishnu-purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata* seem to take a pantheistic view of the world, which becomes the basis of their ethics of universal love. The attitude of devotion towards God unites one not only to Him but also to His creatures. In Vaishṇavism the Gospel of *ahiṁsā* takes a positive and emotional turn. In *V. P.* Prahlāda, the great devotee of God Vishṇu, observes: 'One who causes pain to other by action, mind or speech does on that account suffer great evils. I do not wish, do or speak evil to anybody thinking all along that God resides in all living creatures as also in me . . . . Thus should the wise have unfaltering devotion towards all living creatures, knowing that Hari or God resides in or contains all creatures'.[13] The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* likewise observes : 'This world is another Godhead as it were'. (I. 5.20). Referring to certain Ṛishis it remarks: 'They moved about on earth looking at the universe consisting of being and non-being as nondifferent from their own selves'. (XI. 2.22). In one place in the *V. P.* we read that the householder should distribute or serve food to all creatures with a goodwill, to gods, men, animals, birds, *siddhas, yakshas,* serpents, ants, insects, etc. He should take out and dedicate food for all the creatures in the world, reflecting as follows: This food is dedicated by me for all creatures suffering from hunger on account of their *karma.* May they be satisfied with it. For those who have no mother, father or relative, no food and no means to secure food—for their benefit this food is placed on the earth; may their hunger be appeased, may they be happy. All these creatures, this food and myself are Vishṇu, there is naught other than Vishṇu; therefore I dispense this food for the nourishment of the creatures—the food that constitutes the body of the living beings.[14]

The great saint-poet Tulasīdāsa says in the prologue to the *Rāmacharita-mānasa:* 'With folded hands I offer salutation to the whole world, knowing that it is informed through and through with Sīta and Rāma.' Elsewhere he observes: 'How can they who see the world filled with their Lord feel hostility towards anyone ?' One of the devotees[15] in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* expresses his concern for the suffering creatures in the following words: 'I do not desire to obtain from God the supreme state accompanied by the eight

[13] *V. P.* I. 19. 6, 7, 9

[14] *V. P.* III. Chapter 11. 48-52.

[15] Rantideva, see below, section on ethics of Christianity.

supernatural powers, nor do I desire cessation of birth; may I have allotted to me the experience within me of the miseries of all living beings, so that all of them may be freed from pain'. (IX.21.12). The devotee referred to here is shown offering food and drink to chance beggars while he is himself suffering from hunger and thirst.

Another idea running through Vaishṇava literature is that the devotee should perform actions with a view to pleasing God, and dedicate their fruits to Him. This notion is already found in a developed form in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is expected, not only that the devotee shall not harbour feelings of hostility towards any creature, but also that he shall have kindness and compassion for them. Thus we read in the *Gītā* (XII. 13-14) that the devotee of the following sort is dear to God: 'not having hostility towards any living creature, being friendly, compassionate towards them, without sense of possession, free from egoism, remaining the same under pleasure and pain, forgiving'. The *Gītā* also expresses the significant idea that a man, by *worshipping God through the performance of his own duty*, attains perfection (XVIII. 46). The *Bhāgavata* in one place arranges entities of the world in a hierarchical order. In the hierarchy, it is pointed out, the non-living are inferior to the living, those to others endowed with breath, those to others that have intelligence, those to the others endowed with the operations of sense-organs. In this hierarchy man stands at the top. In the second graded series arranging men in an ascending order of merit the top position is given to the person who dedicates all his activities, even his soul, to God.[16]

The Lord in the *Bhāgavata* also declares in places that 'actions are necessary only until the time when the aspirant attains complete detachment towards the world, or faith in listening to stories about me', etc. (XI.20.9). But He also says in the same place that 'a person who has developed faith in my stories, etc. and is neither too detached nor too attached attains perfection through the path of devotion' (XI. 20.8.) On the whole, the *Bhāgavata* attaches considerable importance to action and recommends its being combined with devotion. Some later writers, such as Rūpa Gosvāmin, however, express the view that neither knowledge nor *karma* should be combined with devotion.[17]

[16] See *Srīmadbhāgavata*, III. 29. 28-33.

[17] For a detailed view of the matter see S. Bhattacharya, *The Philosophy of the Srīmad-Bhāgavata* (Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1962), pp. 151 ff.

Christianity

Christianity is the religion originally preached by Jesus Christ, who was a Jew both by birth and by faith. Jesus professed to teach the Jewish way of life and repeatedly remarked that he had come not to destroy, but to fulfil 'the Law and the Prophets'. The scriptures of Christianity include not only the twenty-seven books or writings that constitute the *New Testament,* but also the sacred books of the Jews known as the *Old Testament.* The two Testaments together make up the Christian *Bible.* The specifically Christian teachings, however, are contained in the *New Testament.* The first three books of the *N.T.*—Matthew, Mark and Luke, the so-called synoptic gospels—recount the life and teachings of Jesus with minor variations. The fourth book, the Gospel according to John, is primarily interpretative. The fifth book relates the story of the followers of Jesus after his death. The remaining books largely consist of letters written by early Christian teachers chief among whom was Saint Paul. The rich and varied Christian religious tradition also includes the different interpretations of the teachings of Jesus by countless thinkers, reformers, etc. belonging to the history of Christendom down the centuries.

In order fully to appreciate both the importance and the limitations of the teachings of Jesus, it is necessary to have some idea of the religion of the *Old Testament.* The earliest parts of the *O.T.* were composed before 1000 B. C., the latest were completed during the second century B. C. Some of the earlier parts may be as old as the later hymns of the *Ṛig-veda.* Both in moral and in religious sensibility those parts compare rather unfavourably with the *Ṛig-veda.* One of the oldest songs is that of Lamech, which is characterized by brutal boastfulness and a terrible thirst for revenge. Addressing his wives he says:[18]

> Adah and Zillah, hear this voice of mine,
> Wives of Lamech, hearken to this speech of mine :
> I slay a man for wounds of mine, and a young man for bruises of mine.
> If Cain takes vengeance sevenfold, Lamech will truly seven and seventyfold.

[18] Quoted by Julius A. Bewer in *The Literature of the Old Testament* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1953). p. 2.

Like the Āryans in the *Ṛig-vedic* period, the Hebrews lived under constant threat from enemies; like the Āryans they worshipped their God or gods mainly with the object of attaining victory. Moses, to whom the first five books of the *O. T.* are attributed, preached the worship of Yahweh to a people who had suffered oppression at the hands of the Egyptian Pharoah. The great prophet was born at a time when the Pharoah had decreed death to every male Jewish baby. Moses, who escaped death through the sagacity of his mother, later on brought mysterious death to the first born in every Egyptian family thereby winning the confidence and following of the Jewish people. To the early Jews Yahweh was primarily a god of war, even as Indra was a god of war to the Indo-Āryans. A famous ode celebrating Israel's victory over Sisera closely resembles the Ṛig-vedic Sūkta where (VII. 83) Sudāsa praises Indra, Varuṇa and his priest who had made him victorious. In one place Yahweh exhorts his followers in the following words: 'And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword'.[19] Elsewhere (II. 20. 3-5) Yahweh informs the people that they shall not have any god other than him, and that he is a jealous God. In the same chapter we find the following moral commandments or instructions:

> Honour thy father and thy mother; thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

The above commandments are from the *Book of Exodus*; they are repeated in several other places such as Deuteronomy, Ch. V. In Ch. XI of this book man is commanded to 'love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always'. In Ch. XV we read:

> If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and

[19] Leviticus, XXVI. 7.

shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth.

Commenting on the progress of the Hebrew mind from the 'semi-savage state to a highly moral and ethical civilization' Dr. S. E. Frost writes:

> The earlier books were produced in a semi-savage nomadic culture and reflect the crude war-infested thinking of these early people who were polytheistic, believed in polygamy and practised many religious rites that seem strange to us to-day. Chief among these was human sacrifice . . . (later on) their leaders preached a code of human relationships that reach beyond much that we have been able to attain even in our own day. By so doing they repudiated the teachings and practices of their ancestors. There is a great difference between the god of early Hebrews who ordered his followers to destroy their enemies even to dashing the heads of babies against rocks and the God of Isaiah and Hosea who taught men to love their enemies.[20]

As stated above Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil 'the law, or the prophets'.[21] The *New Testament* repeats practically all the important moral commandments of the older Testament. But Jesus did more than repeat the teachings of the Prophets. He refined both the ethical and the religious parts of those teachings. This refinement appears to be particularly marked when viewed in relation to the earlier books of the *O. T.*; even in relation to its later parts, the teachings of Jesus show considerable spiritual progress :

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
> But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matt. V. 38-39).
> Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

[20] Dr. S. E. Frost, *The Sacred Writings of the World's Great Religions* (The New Home Library, The Philadelphia), p. 154.

[21] Matthew, V. 17.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. (*loc. cit.*)

While enjoining charity Jesus recommends: 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.' (*ibid.*, VI. 3-4).

The phrase 'shall reward thee openly' occurs thrice in the chapter from which the above extract has been taken. Variants of this phrase, embodying a negative emphasis (i.e., connoting punishment) occur as many times in the same chapter. These expressions denote one standard form of relationship between God and man as envisaged in the *N. T.* Another relationship is emphasized by the conception of God as the loving Father. God is the Father of all human beings, as He is the Creator of the whole world. But the most important proof of God's love for man is that He sent his 'only begotten son' Jesus to save mankind by embracing the cross.

The Christian doctrine, as elaborated in the extensive literature of the *N. T.*, consists of the following three parts: (1) belief in God, the Creator of the universe; and in his son Jesus Christ, who is both the Son of God and the Son of man, and who acts as an intermediary between God and man; and in the Holy Ghost; (2) stress on the necessity of Faith in God and his Son; and on obeying the commandments and glorifying God. These commandments enjoin both love of God and love of the neighbour. (3) The third part of the doctrine relates to belief in Original Sin and the possibility of Salvation through faith in Christ and the grace of God. Both as a body of doctrine and as a creed Christianity developed and changed in the later centuries, but it has never seriously questioned or departed from the fundamental teachings of the *N. T.* The few philosophers and thinkers who dared question its fundamental dogmas were openly declared by it to be heretical; their views could not form part of the orthodox doctrine. In this respect, Christianity presents a notable contrast to Hinduism which latter found room for most divergent theoretical beliefs as well as for numerous forms of worship within its ever-expanding historical identity.

We shall now pass on to deal with the three parts of the Christian doctrine, taken in a slightly altered order, in greater detail.

Christian Theology

Although Christianity is a theistic religion, its principal scripture, the Synoptic Gospels, and even the *N. T.* as a whole, has very little to say about God. As a matter of fact the *N. T.* is a book concerned mainly with the lives and activities of Jesus and his apostles. On the other hand the central and dominant figure in the *O. T.* is God, the Creator of the universe who feels special concern for the house of Israel. This God, of course, is a Spirit; it cannot be said though that the *O. T.* has any refined conception of spirit or the spiritual. In Genesis (I. 2) we read that 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters'. In other places 'spirit' seems to be equivalent of a ghost as in the following sentences: 'The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon' (Judges, VI. 34) and 'The spirit of the Lord began to move him' (Judges, XIII. 25). Again, 'spirit' seems to be associated in the minds of the authors of the *O. T.* with the power to breathe: 'The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life'. (Job, XXXIII. 4). God is all-powerful: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty'. (1 Chronicles, XXIX. 11). He is also Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is 'light and in him is no darkness at all'. (1 John, I. 5). God is also described as 'sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up'. (Isaiah, VI. 1.). He is 'King eternal, immortal, invisible'. (1 Timothy, I. 17.).

In the above description of God only two quotations have been taken from *N. T.*, the rest are from the *O. T.* Jesus takes this conception of God more or less for granted.

Jesus is conscious of his special relationship with God, whom he often refers to as 'my Father'. Jesus bids us both love God and fear Him: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength'. (Mk. XII. 30). Also: 'And fear not them that kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell'. (Matt. X. 28). Obviously Jesus does not suspect that love cannot be commanded. No attempt has been made in the *N. T.* to present God as lovable. That God is our Father who looks, or may look, after our needs *if we obey Him,* is not a sufficient reason for extending love as distinguished from respect to Him. Later Christian writers are fond of equating God's love with disinterested parental love, but the

equation is not borne out by the text of the gospels. Surely, no Father can ever think of casting his children into fire, much less into everlasting fire of hell.[22] Far from being disinterested, God's love towards His creatures particularly men seems to be determined wholly by the degree of obedience and adoration extended by mankind to Him. Christianity does not believe in the *law of karma* or moral retribution in any strict sense; the wrath of the Christian God is directed not only against the unrighteous but also against those who refuse to honour and glorify Him. Like a despot who feels insulted when ignored, God may inflict the harshest punishment on people and even *incline them to do evil deeds,* in case they fail to be thankful to Him and glorify Him. Thus St. Paul reports:

> Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.
> For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. (Romans X. 24, 26).

The above passages, and those following them, ill accord both with the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and that of atonement. The Vaishṇava God also is inclined to punish the evil-doers and those who deny God; but, inasmuch as Vaishṇavism subscribes to belief in the *law of karma,* God therein is more or less an instrument of moral retribution. As the *Gītā* declares, God incarnates himself as a finite being chiefly with the object of reestablishing the reign of righteousness on earth. Apart from this, the partiality of the Vaishṇava God for the tribe of gods and for the devotees is a patent fact. In Ch. XVI of the *Gītā,* after describing men belonging to the demoniac order, the Lord remarks: 'such people, who are full of hatred or hostility towards others, cruel, vilest among men, I repeatedly throw into demoniacal wombs in different births. O Son of Kunti, cast into demoniacal wombs, birth after birth, these fools, attaining not to Me, ever sink into lower states of existence.' (XVI. 19-20). The God of the Vaishṇavas seems to

[22] Cf. Matt. (XVIII. 8): Therefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands and two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

have no more compassion for beings with evil disposition than the God of St. Paul! Some thinkers of our own time who have pleaded that punishment be inflicted on criminals mainly with a view to reforming them, show a more developed moral sensibility in this regard than the authors of the aforesaid scriptures.

As stated above the *N. T.* does not attempt to present God as lovable; this is even more true of the *O. T.* But the centre of the Christian creed, as we shall gradually realize, is Jesus Christ rather than God; and Jesus, as depicted in the *N. T.*, is certainly a lovable personality. Over and above his spiritual earnestness and ethical seriousness, Jesus seems to have qualities which impart to his personality almost a lyrical charm and sweetness. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Up.* (III. 5. 1.) calls upon the learned brāhmin to abandon (the pride of) learning and stay like a child (*bālyena tishṭhāset*); and Jesus declares: 'Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'. (Matt. XVIII. 3). And again: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God'. (Mk. X. 14). Taking a child in his arms, he said to his disciples: 'whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me'. (*ibid.*, IX. 37). Charming also is his reference to the 'lilies of the field', like to whom 'even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed'. (Matt. VI. 29). Not only is Jesus exceptionally human, simple and charming, he is also benevolently forgiving. When the Scribes and Pharisees 'brought unto him a woman taken in adultery' and suggested that she be stoned according to the law commanded by Moses, Jesus 'stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*'. When they continued asking him, 'he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her'. (Jn. VIII. 3-7). Thereupon everybody left quietly; and Jesus said to her, 'where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?' On her saying 'No man, Lord', Jesus said unto her, 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more'. Jesus is certainly more forgiving than God as depicted in the Bible.

Jesus's estimate of his own status *vis-à-vis* his relationship with God is rather ambiguous. He certainly claimed and said that he was the son of God; but, in the synoptic gospels, he equally

emphasized the notion that God is the father of all. 'Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven is perfect'. (Matt. V. 48). And also: 'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before you ask Him....Our Father, which art in heaven'. (Matt. VI. 8-9). Sometimes he claims an exclusive relationship between himself and God. This is borne out by the following utterances of his :

No man knoweth the Son, but the Father. (Matt. XI. 27).
Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke, II. 49).
No man knoweth...the Father is, but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him. (Luke, X. 22).

The last passage sounds mystical, and betrays the claim, on the part of Jesus, to an intimacy with God which none else may enjoy. This trend of thought becomes still more pronounced in the gospel of John. There the role of Christ as liberator of mankind and as the mediator between God and man is emphasized for the first time. These ideas are taken up and elaborated later on by St. Paul and others. The following extracts from the gospel of John and the Epistles of St. Paul will bring out the central emphases associated with these notions.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John, VIII. 36).
There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. (Romans, VIII. 1).
Christ.. .is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. (*ibid.*, VII. 34).
There is.. .one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1. Timothy, II. 5).
He is the mediator of the new testament. (Hebrews, IX. 15).
Ye are come...to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. (*ibid.*, XII. 22, 24).

The notion that Christ atoned for the sins of mankind by sacrificing his life, which is more or less absent in the synoptic gospels, makes conspicuous appearance in the later books of the *N. T.* But the idea is already present in the *O. T.* Thus we read in Isaiah

(LIII. 5) : 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed'. In the *N. T.*, the idea is of more frequent occurrence :

> 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. (Jn. I. 29).
> 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. (ICO. XV. 3).
> ...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 Jn. I. 7).
> In whom we have redemption through his blood (Ep. I. 7).

The idea that Christ gave his life as a ransom for many or all, is also present in the *N. T.* In Mark (X. 44-45) we read :

> And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be the servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom to the many.

But the idea assumes the form of a dogma chiefly at the hands of St. Paul, who observes :

> God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. (RO. V. 8).
> Christ Jesus...gave himself a ransom for all. (1. Ti. II. 5-6).

The concept of Christ as mediator and redeemer and as one who sacrificed his life for the redemption of mankind constitutes the core of the Christian doctrine. These various aspects of Christ have been debated at length by Christian theologians throughout the later centuries ; they continue to be debated in our own times. Metaphysically, the most important issue is the one relating to his divinity. Should Christ be looked upon as divine, or should he be regarded as an ideal person merely ? Here again the general perspective of devout Christians may be said to he Trinitarian. This does not necessarily imply abandonment of monotheism. Just as the God of popular Hinduism including devotional theism assumes the three forms of Brahmā the creator, Vishṇu the sustainer and Śiva the destroyer of the universe without surrendering his essential

unity, similarly the Christian God manifests himself as Christ and as the Holy Spirit as well. On this point Christ's own utterances are ambiguous and cut both ways. Apart from such mystical utterances as 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father' and 'As thou, Father, *art* in me and I in thee', there are statements which directly affirm the identity (Jn. XVII. 21) of the Son with the Father, e.g. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'. (Jn. XIV. 9). On the other hand there are statements which clearly imply duality of the Father and the Son, e.g.: 'My Father is greater than I' (Jn. XIV. 28); 'The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do' (Jn. V. 19). In fact the reference to 'My Father's business' (Lu. II. 49), indicates both Christ's nearness to God and his difference from Him. There is stress on difference in the following utterance of Christ: 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God'. (Matt. XIX. 17). Here it may be remembered that the statements identifying Son with Father all occur outside the synoptic gospels. That, however, does not affect the circumstance that the figure of Christ has been an object of adoration for a very large majority of Christians. During the nineteenth century, under the impact of science and Biblical criticism, the so-called liberal theologians tried to deny the divinity of Christ and to propagate the view that Jesus was an ideal person whose example deserves emulation, but who ought not to be deified or worshipped as God. These theologians also declined to adhere to the dogma of the inerrancy of the scripture. Along with the emphasis on the humanity of Christ a distinction was drawn between the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus. A distinction was also seen between the gospel of Jesus, and the gospel of Paul. 'Jesus was interpreted as teacher, leader, brother, source of power, morally unique, the fulfilment of the divine indwelling. It could be said that we see him as God or that he shows us God, or, has the value of God for us, but beyond this it was felt better not to go.'[23]

A prominent feature of the personality of Jesus as depicted in the *N. T.* is his power to perform miracles. Here again Christ's own utterances seem to involve conflicting attitudes. Having performed a miracle, Christ is sometimes found asking people to keep silent about it, e.g.: 'See thou say nothing to any man'

[23] John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1955), p. 221.

(Mk. I. 44); and 'He charged them straightly that no man should know it'. (*ibid.*, V.43). Elsewhere he seems desirous, if not anxious, that his miraculous powers be noticed: 'and he said unto them, "why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?". (*ibid.*, IV.40). One miracle repeatedly performed by Jesus Christ was the driving out of ghosts or spirits. Now the nineteenth century, under the growing influence of science, would believe neither in spirits nor in miracles. The liberal theologians therefore were disinclined to stress the aspect of Jesus associated with miraculous stories. They also entertained the view that Jesus could be mistaken. Thus, it was pointed out that Jesus was mistaken in the belief that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch.[24] Liberal Protestant theologians, in other words, tended to conceive Jesus as a human being and were content to claim for him the status of a great religious genius.

This liberal view of the status of Christ evoked a sharp reaction in the twentieth century. After the first world war, such important theologians as Karl Emil Brunner and Eduard Thurneysen published significant works criticising the liberal theological thinkers of the preceding century such as Freidrich Schliermacher, Albert Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack, advocating a return to the classical Pauline-Lutheran-Calvinistic view of the nature and role of Jesus Christ. Stressing the unique character of Christian revelation as given in the Person of Christ, they insisted on the acceptance of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement, exactly in the form in which they are formulated or suggested in the Epistles of St. Paul and later on elaborated by the Reformers.

The orthodox Christians look upon Christ as Divinity Incarnate or a form of Divinity consubstantial with God and Holy spirit. In this respect, their faith resembles Vaishṇavism which latter also accepts the possibility of Divine incarnations. Like the liberal theologians in Europe, the Ārya-Samājists in India attempted to interpret the figures of Rāma and Kṛishṇa as ideal heroes or heroic personalities. The interpretation, of course, could not be acceptable to the Vaishṇava devotees. It may be added though that belief in Incarnations is not taken too seriously by the intellectuals in present day Hindu India. Apart from the intellectuals the generality of the Hindus continue to worship not only Rāma

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

and Kṛishṇa (and Śiva) but also quite a few of the minor gods and goddesses.

Classical Vaishṇavism, however, differs from orthodox Christianity in its view of incarnations in two important respects. First, it believes that Lord Vishṇu has manifested himself through the ages in several forms or Incarnations, though the several forms embodied various degrees of the divinity and powers of Vishṇu. Secondly an incarnation is not looked upon as an intermediary between God and man. The incarnate God directly reveals himself to and "saves" the devotees. As a consequence, the incarnate God manifests all the powers associated with Godhead. Further, the Vaishṇavas believe that the body assumed by Lord Vishṇu is different from the ordinary material body. That body is composed of a special type of matter (*śuddha-sattva*) according to Rāmānuja; it is magical (*māyika*) body according to Śaṅkara. The Christian view gives rise to some difficulties which the Vaishṇava doctrines avoid. If Christ is the Son and Mediator, how can he also be identical with God ? Should the devotion of a devout Christian be directed primarily on Christ or on God (or the Holy Spirit)? Surely, devotion to the Mediator cannot be equated with devotion to God !

Original Sin, Atonement and Grace

The concepts of "original sin" and "atonement" are connected both logically and doctrinally; the emphasis on "grace" as a determinant of salvation is a corollary from the above two dogmas. The concept of original sin was first introduced by the apostle Paul who gave a new interpretation to the story of Adam's fall related in the Book of Genesis. It is supposed that the whole of mankind inherits the sin committed by the first parent or parents. Paul asserts both the doctrine of original sin and that of atonement by and redemption through Christ in several places. In the *O.T.* it is said : 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not'. (Ec. VII. 20) And Paul states :

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this earth ? (RO. VII. 24).

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (RO.V 19).

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (I CO. XV.22).

The concept of sin has been variously understood by different theological thinkers; it is taken to connote selfishness and egoism, pride, innate depravity and lust, remoteness and alienation from God, etc. Some liberal theologians, who found the story of fall too mythical and the notion of Adam's sin infecting all his descendants too unreasonable tended to identify sin with a condition of "fallenness", without an historical fall. Thus, Mr. W. H. Moberly said:

> Not the origin but the fact of mutual entanglement in evil is what is really asserted. That the individual . . . is hampered by a sinful "nature" and sinful impulses even before his first voluntary simple act; that he inherits a bias and predisposition to evil; that behind individual sin there is corporate sin and corporate liability to punishment; these assertions are the real nerve of the doctrine.[25]

But the early Christian thinkers interpreted the story of Fall literally, and believed that every baby that came into the world was already contaminated by the original sin. As a corollary from the dogma of Original Sin coupled with the belief that baptism alone could save a man from eternal damnation, St. Augustine believed that 'all babies dying unbaptized would burn for ever in a hell '(although he expressed 'a pious opinion that in their case the pain would not be so acute as in case of the actual sinners'.)[26] This Augustinian view of man's nature being intrinsically sinful was fully endorsed by the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, who therefore believed that man could be saved only by the grace of God operating through Jesus Christ. It is noteworthy that recent theologians such as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner accept the dogma of original sin as interpreted by St. Augustine and the classical Reformers.

It may be added here that some of the Vaishṇava writers, too, betray an acute awareness of their moral weaknesses, and are found praying frequently to God to deliver them from those weaknesses.

[25] *Foundations*, A Statement of Christian Beliefs in Terms of Modern Thought: By Seven Oxford Men (Macmillan, London, 1929), chapter on "The Atonement", p. 282.

[26] Edwyn Bevan, *Christianity* (Oxford University Press, London, reprinted 1959), pp. 102-103.

They sometimes challenge God, in moments of intimate communion with Him during prayer, to measure His grace and compassion *against* the depth of their degradation or depravity. The famous Hindi poet Sūradāsa is particularly fond of flinging such challenge in the face of his Deity, Lord Kṛishṇa. In one of the *padas* he calls himself the king of sinners:

> O Lord, I am the king (or chief) of all the fallen (human beings). My tongue was always engaged in slandering others—this trumpet was ever operative in the world. Craving is my land, wishes my soldiers, the senses are my swords, lust is my chief minister ever inclined to offer evil advice; anger is my door keeper; mounting the elephant of egotism with the crown of greed over my head, with the army consisting of the company of evil persons, I proceed to conquer the world; . . . delusion, pride and countless other faults are the minstrels employed to laud me . . . .[27]

This short piece enumerates practically all the vices that are included under the concept of sin by Christian writers. Elsewhere the same poet declares:

> O Lord, I have entered into a competition with you . . . you have taken the obstinate vow to redeem the crowds of the sinful. . . . Every hour you are contemplating to liberate me and inquiring about me, but (I warn you) the enterprise will make you sweat—O, why have you taken this obstinate vow ?[28]

But we do not find any elaborate theorizing about sin in Vaishṇava writers. Of course, there is no counterpart of the doctrine of original sin in Vaishṇavism. Such a doctrine would be inconsistent with the principle of *Karma* which was universally accepted by Indian religio-philosophical thinkers. The Vaishṇava view of sin seems to approximate to the liberal Protestant conception of the depravity of human nature. Here it may be remembered that philosophic Hinduism presents the concept of *avidyā* or ignorance, instead of that of sin, as the root-basis of the human plight or human bondage.

[27] *Sūra-pañcharatna*, ed. L. Bhagavāndīna (Allahabad, 1939), p. 31.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Stress on Faith and the Doctrine of Grace

In Vaishṇavism greatest emphasis has been laid on man's cultivating devotion to God. The delineation of *bhakti* or devotion by Vaishṇava writers has no worthy parallel in Christian literature. Instead, we find the greatest emphasis being laid there on the need of faith in Christ and in God. Equally, stress has been laid on the need of obeying the commandments of God. There is a distinction between faith and devotion or *bhakti*; the latter implies a direct apprehension of the presence of, and a direct relation with, God; the former implies a trust not based on a direct contact with Godhead. 'Without faith it is impossible to please him' (He XI. 6), says St. Paul. 'Blessed are they', said Jesus, 'that have not seen, and *yet* have believed. (Jn. XX. 29). The nearest analogue to *bhakti* in Christian religious thought seems to be prayer. Popularly speaking, prayer includes the element of petition consisting in appeal to God to bestow some good or to ward off some evil; but it involves something more. 'Prayer is a certain attitude or predisposition of the personality by which we give ourselves more completely to the creativity of God'.[29] Prayer may be collective and involve reference to the common good by putting us 'under the control of that creativity which makes us more sensitive and responsive to the interests of people round about us' who in their turn 'become more sensitive to our interests'.[30] According to Mr. Henry Nelson Wieman prayer 'includes worship'. Now worship includes a lively sense of the 'need for the true and living God'. It also involves 'repeated act of self-commitment to God'.[31] Christian prayer and worship, to out mind, involve communion or the sense of intimacy with God affecting the worshipper's whole life, individual and social. It is also true that in prayer the saintly worshippers are more concerned with the aspect of personal communion with God than with petitioning for any gain.

Prayer as Mystic Communion with God

The highest and the noblest forms of prayer are to be met with in the lives of the Catholic saints. Prayer figures as an important concept in mystical theology. Among the saints themselves who

[29] *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Vergilius Ferm (Philosophical Library, New York, 1945), p. 602.

[30] *Loc. cit.*

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 602, 630-31

have attempted to expound or conceptualize and clarify the nature of prayer, the names of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa stand out prominently. Two forms of prayer are generally distinguished, ordinary and extra-ordinary or mystical. Ordinary prayer is that which is consciously pursued by man of faith. Prayer in any form is an attempt or disposition to dwell in the presence of God. Further, all prayer is a form of the contemplation of God. Such contemplation should be a normal feature in the life of every Christian. However, what most people can achieve is ordinary prayer. Such prayer is 'acquired, active, ordinary contemplation'.[32] Mystical prayer contrasts with ordinary prayer in that the former is 'infused, passive, extraordinary'. Contemplation or prayer has no necessary connection with visions, revelations, raptures, etc.; it need not be looked upon as something miraculous. Various steps and grades are distinguished as leading to and constituting levels in mystical prayer; several terms are used to indicate different levels and forms of that prayer. Fr de Besse expounds St. John's view of prayer somewhat as follow: 'meditation carefully practised leads on to affective prayer. This in its turn leads just as surely to the "prayer of faith". The grace of prayer generally terminates here, for it has reached the degree of ordinary perfection. Beyond that point prayer becomes extraordinary.'[33] In extraordinary or mystical prayer, God is contemplated in the darkness of the soul as it were. St. John uses the phrase "prayer of loving attention" to indicate certain stages in mystical prayer. Other phrases used by other authorities are: 'simple dwelling in the presence of God'; 'simple unity and unique simplicity and repose in the presence of God'; 'a complete surrender' to God. The prayer is also characterised as 'calm attention of the soul to God'. In the highest stage of prayer the soul is completely passive, possessed as it were by the Holy Ghost. According to St. Teresa all real prayer is supernatural, being entirely the work of God. The highest form of prayer is the prayer of union. The prayer preceding union and leading to it is called by her the 'prayer of quiet'.[34] The prayer of loving attention seems to be recognised by her under the name 'interior recollection'. While

[32] See Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (Arrow Books Ltd., London, 1960), p. 9.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

St. John recommends that one should endeavour actively to empty one's mind as a step preparatory to higher forms of contemplation and prayer, St. Teresa teaches that one should 'let intellect and will go on working in discoursive and affective prayer until God stops them and creates the needed silence.'[35] The mystics differ in details as regards both the character of the highest union with God in prayer or contemplation, and the order and kinds of steps leading to that union; but they are all agreed that that union can be finally achieved, not by the aspirant's own effort, but by the grace of God. Like the Bhakta philosophers of India, the Christian mystics are pronouncedly dualistic in their conception of mystic union or communion with God; they are also very close to each other in emphasizing the need of the grace of God.

Here two points of doctrinal importance may be mentioned. First, most of the orthodox theologians, following the text 'Man shall not see Me and live' (Exodus xxxiii. 20) deny with St. Paul (I Tim. VI. 16) the possibility of 'the idea of the vision of God's Essence by any man'.[36] Secondly, some mystics such as St. Teresa, while characterizing certain kind of prayer, speak indifferently of 'talking with God or Jesus Christ.'[37]

Importance of Faith

We have seen that the attainment of highest forms of contemplative prayer depends on divine grace. Insistence on faith is closely related to the doctrine of grace. Both imply trust in the power and goodness of God and a distrust in one's own power or capacity to redeem or save oneself. Here again Christianity in all its forms believes in the mediating role of Christ. 'The grace of God . . . is given you by Jesus Christ' (1 Co. I.4), says St. Paul. And again: 'For all have sinned . . . . Being justified by his grace through the redemption that is Christ Jesus' (Ro. III. 23-24). Schleirmacher is reported to have defined Christianity as "a monotheistic religion of a teleological kind in which everything is related to Christ, the Redeemer".[38] The general application of

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[37] See *ibid.*, p. 18. The expression 'spouses of Christ' is commonly applied to consecrated virgins. Mystical writers also speak of spiritual marriage with Christ who is spoken of as the Bridegroom.

[38] *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 165

the term "Saviour" to Christ also emphasizes his significant role as mediator between God and man.

The doctrine of grace assumed an extreme form later in Protestant Christianity. The doctrine was construed to mean that the true believer should distrust not only himself but also any good deeds that he can perform. As Martin Luther says: 'Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works.'[39] And a man becomes good by having faith in God. 'Therefore the first care of every Christian ought to be to lay aside all reliance on work and strengthen his faith alone more and more, and by it grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus, who has suffered and risen again for him.'[40] 'It follows that works justify no man, but a man must be justified before he can do any good work. . . it is faith alone which by mere mercy of God ihrough Christ and by means of his word, can worthily and sufficiently justify and save the person, and that a Christian man needs no work, no law, for his salvation'.[41] A startling corollary drawn from the above is that 'no good work can profit an unbeliever to justification and salvation'.[42] Similar views are held by John Calvin. In his "Letter to Cardinal James Sadolet," he observed:

> And then, when all, with no small insult to thy mercy, put confidence in good works, when by good works they strove to merit thy favour, to procure justification to expiate their sins and make satisfaction to thee—each of these things obliterating and making void the virtues of Christ's cross—they were yet altogether ignorant wherein good works consisted.[43]

The implication of the last statement is that, without Christian revelation, no people could have known virtue and therefore practised it.

It is not unusual to come across in popular Vaishṇava literature passages threatening condemnation of and prophesying spiritual ruin for those who do not have faith in a particular Incarnation of Vishṇu.

[39] *Great Voices of the Reformation*, ed. Harry Emerson Fosdick (Modern Library, New York, 1952), "Concerning Christian Liberty", p. 90.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[42] *Loc. Cit.*

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

The gospel of utter dependence on God and the belief in salvation through God's grace are also emphasized by some Vaishṇava writers. But, living as these writers did under the shadow of the universally accepted law of *Karma*, they would not have found it possible to condemn men lacking faith in Vishṇu even when they led virtuous lives. The question has been debated by some Vaishṇava thinkers whether or not intense and deep devotion to God can destroy accumulated stock of previous evil actions. In regard to this Dr. S. N. Dasgupta cautiously concludes: 'As regards the destruction of *prārabdha karma* also, Rāmānuja and Veṅkaṭanātha hold that though most of it is destroyed by the grace of God, yet a trace of it is left. Vatsyavarada in his *Prapanna-pārijāta* follows the same idea.'[44] Dasgupta refers to some other writers also, who hold a similar view.

How such an attitude towards the efficacy of Christian faith may sometimes encourage evil conduct is borne out by an episode recorded by Mahatma Gandhi. A Christian friend who was anxious to convert Gandhiji to Christianity, once explained to him the significance of Christianity thus:

> You cannot understand the beauty of our religion. From what you say, it appears, that you must be brooding over transgressions every moment of your life, always mending them and atoning for them. How can this ceaseless cycle of action bring you redemption ? You can never have peace. You admit that we are all sinners. Now, look at the perfection of our belief. Our attempts at improvement and atonement are futile. And yet redemption we must have. How can we bear the burden of sin ? We can but throw it on Jesus. He is the only sinless Son of God. It is His word that those who believe in Him shall have everlasting life. Therein lies God's infinite mercy. And as we believe in the atonement of Jesus, our own sins do not bind us. Sin we must. It is impossible to live in this world sinless. And, therefore, Jesus suffered and atoned for all the sins of mankind. Only he who accepts His great redemption can have eternal peace. Think what a life of restlessness is yours, and what a promise of peace we have ?

[44] S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III (Cambridge, reprinted 1952), p. 380.

Needless to say Gandhiji was not convinced by the argument. 'If this be the Christianity acknowledged by all Christians', he replied, 'I cannot accept it. I do not seek redemption from the consequences of my sin. I seek to be redeemed from sin itself or rather from the very thought of sin.' Thereupon the Christian Brother said: 'I assure you your attempt is fruitless'. Concluding the episode Gandhiji reports: 'And the Brother proved as good as his word. He knowingly committed transgressions and showed me that he was undisturbed by the thought of them.'[45]

The episode seems to constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of insistent emphasis on the doctrines of faith and grace. It proves how the doctrine of redemption through Christ may lead to the weakening of the will to improve morally and spiritually. Dr. Radhakrishnan reports that some followers of the Tengalai School of *Bhakti* adopted 'the dangerous doctrine of *dosha-bhogya*, namely, that God enjoys sin, since it gives a larger scope for the display of his grace.'[46] Fortunately, in India the doctrine of *Karma* has been far too prevalent to permit any such doctrine to gain currency among the people.

Christian Ethics

To the modern mind the most important part of the doctrine of Christ is its ethical teaching. That ethics has a sort of universal appeal which is not possessed by theological parts of the Christian creed. The Sermon on the Mount, the first sermon delivered by Jesus after his victory over the Satan, constitutes a most important document in the development of man's moral ideas. The sermon, in fact, is not merely a testament of morals. The proper sphere of morals are the relationships among men living in society; the root basis of morality is the concept of justice. Morality taken in this sense constitutes the subject-matter of the greatest work of Plato, the *Republic*. But the morality preached by Christ goes beyond the order and requirements of justice; in a word, it is religious

[45] M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, pp. 8-9

[46] *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. (Allen & Unwin, London, 1931), p. 669.

In the *N. T.* there is at least one book, The Epistle of James, where the importance of works has been stressed. We read 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? Can faith save him ? . . . Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead ?'

(James II. 14, 19-20). The book is disowned by some Christians.

morality. The religious man does not seek merely to be just, he seeks to do more than justice in the practice of self-sacrifice.

The *N.T.* repeats many of the moral injunctions contained in the *O.T.* It goes beyond the morality of the *O.T.* mainly by giving a more inward and inclusive meaning to the earlier commandments. That Jesus was conscious of the change in emphasis he was introducing is shown by the following statement of his: 'For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven'. (Matt. V. 20).

The refinement and liberalization of current ethical notions that Jesus sought to bring about is shown by the following sentences in the Sermon on the Mount:

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also . . . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.[47]
>
> Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shall not commit adultery:
>
> But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.[48]

The commandment 'love thy neighbour' is next in importance only to the one enjoining the love of God. 'Leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift'. (Matt. V. 24). This shows the earnestness with which Jesus recommends love and consideration for our fellow beings. Jesus is opposed to ostentatious practice of virtue. 'All their works they do for to be seen of men . . . be called of men, Rabby, Rabby' (Matt. XXIII. 5-7). Instead, he recommends: 'when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth';[49] and 'when thou makest a meal, call the

[47] Matt. V. 38-39, 44.

[48] *Ibid.*, V. 27-28.

[49] Matt. VI. 3. Cp. *BG* : The gift which is made to one who does nothing in return, with the idea that it is one's duty to give and with due regard to the place, time and the recipient of the gift, is said to be *sāttvika*. (*XVII*. 20).

poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind : and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee.'[50]

Jesus recommends the ethics of sacrifice and suffering, forgiveness and love. 'He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.' (Matt. X. 38). A reward is promised for virtuous life, that reward is the entry and life in the kingdom of heaven: 'For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just'; and '*blessed is he*, that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God'.[51] The idea of recompense or return also occurs in a different form: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'. (Matt. VII. 1); and 'the merciful . . . shall obtain mercy'. (Matt. V. 7). The teaching of virtue is occasionally reinforced by the promise of usual rewards: 'He who has left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for the sake of Christ or the gospel's sake, shall receive all these hundredfold here, and also eternal life in the world to come'. (Mk. X. 29-30). In some places Jesus himself seems to follow the ethics of reciprocity:

> Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the son of Man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.[52]

One feels that statements like the above are unworthy of Christ, and inconsistent with the ethics of love for enemies. Similarly unworthy is the episode where Chirst is reported as cursing the fig tree :

> . . . He was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not *yet*. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard *it*. . . . And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.[53]

[50] Luke XIV. 13-14. Manu enjoins that the householder should offer food to gods, rishis, ancestors, household deities, guests, etc. before eating himself. 'A person who cooks only for himself eats sin only.' (Manu. III. 118; also see *BG*. III. 13).

[51] Luke, XIV. 14-15.

[52] Luke, XII. 8-9.

[53] Mk. XI. 13-14, 20.

On entering Jerusalem 'Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of money-changers, and seats of them that sold doves'. This too, one feels, was not altogether an exemplary piece of behaviour. Apart from the preaching of high moral ideals the important events in Jesus's life, to which moral significance may be attached, are the numerous miracles of healing that he performed. Many of the stories of such miracles are bound up with belief in ghosts or spirits that haunt and afflict human beings. Commenting on Jesus's practice of the love he preached Mr. Edwyn Bevan, who also quotes one Mr. Claude Montefiore, writes as follows:

> Mr. Claude Montefiore has observed, very pertinently on his promises, that while Jesus laid down as a precept that men should love their enemies, there is no recorded instance of his showing love to Pharisees. Mr. Montefiore might have carried his observation further; there is no recorded instance of Jesus showing love to publicans and sinners at great cost to himself.[54]

What Mr. Montefiore, as quoted by Bevan, has actually said is this:

> What one would have wished to find in the life story of Jesus would be one single incident in which Jesus actually performed a living deed to one of his Rabbinic antagonists or enemies. That would have been worth all the *injunctions* of the Sermon on the Mount about the love of enemies put together.

St. Paul has remarked about himself: 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do.' (Ro. *VII*. 19). This exactly parallels the statement in the *Mahābhārata*: 'I know *dharma* or righteousness but have no inclination to practise it; I know *adharma* or moral evil, but have no will to desist from it'. This is true to a higher or lesser degree of almost all human beings. Inasmuch as Jesus was the son of man, it applies to him also; there is some gap between what he preaches and what he is

[54] Edwin Bevan, *Christianity*, p. 239.

able to practise.[55] The great Mahatma Gandhi was conscious of the presence of some such gap between the ideals he cherished and the extent to which he was able to put those ideals in practice, though Gandhi's life is singularly rich in acts of love and service.

The Vaishṇava God is more consistent in terms of the nature and deeds that are ascribed to him. In Vaishṇava literature relatively more edifying and heroic examples of the practice of forgiveness, compassion and self-denial are those relating to the true devotees of the Lord. Thus in the *Śrīmadhbhāgavata* is related the story of one Rantideva who, along with his family, had been without food and drink for forty-eight days. Next morning when he was going to eat something that he had been able to procure, a Brāhmin guest appeared. Seeing Vishṇu everywhere, the king gave part of the food to the Brāhmin. Then came a Śudra, then another guest with several dogs, with the result that the king had to part with all his food. When he was about to drink the water that alone had been left, an extremely thirsty person appeared. Overcome by compassion the king gave the water to the new guest. When the king was about to die of hunger and thirst, Lord Vishṇu appeared and saved him along with his family.

The stories of forgiveness by the devotees of Vishṇu are legion: The king Ambarīsha and the sage Vasishṭha are among several mythological figures who distinguished themselves by the exercise of forgiveness towards men of inflammable temperaments. Outside Vaishṇava literature stories and episodes of self-sacrificing charity and compassion may be found in the *Mahābhārata* and the Jātakas. A well-known story, that of Jīmūtavāhana, is related in several ancient works including the *Avadāna-kalpa-latā* and the *Kathāsaritsāgara*; it is dramatized in the play *Nāgānanda* by the poet Harsha. The great Garuḍa used to devour everyday, one member of the Nāga tribe offered to the former as a victim under an agreement. One day it was the turn of a certain Śaṅkhachūḍa to be offered to Garuḍa. Jīmūtavāhana came to know about it by seeing the would-be victim's wailing mother. He offered himself as a substitute for the Nāga Śaṅkhachūda. (When Garuḍa came to know of

[55] It is recorded in the gospel of St. Mark that Jesus or his soul was 'exceedingly sorrowful unto death'. Jesus 'went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him'. In the same connection he confessed: 'the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak'. (Mk., XIV. 34, 35, 38).

this he not only spared the life of Jīmūtavāhana but also restored to life the Nagas that he had killed earlier). Another celebrated story, of one king Śivi, occurs in several Buddhist works and also in the *Mahābhārata*. The Mahābhārata version of the story runs as follows: A pigeon, pursued by a fowler, fell into the lap of king Śivi who was renowned for his charity. The fowler pressed his claim for the pigeon whereupon the king offered to cut off from his body flesh equal in weight to the pigeon. The fowler agreed, and the king cut off a slice of flesh from his thigh with a view to weighing it against the pigeon. However, the pigeon grew heavier and heavier as the king added more and more flesh from his body. Later on it was discovered that the fowler was none other than the god Indra himself and the pigeon's form had been assumed by the god Agni; the two gods had come to test the strength of the king's attachment to virtue. (Needless to say, the two gods restored the king's body to the previous state of wholeness.)

As observed earlier the moral ideals preached by Jesus can be pursued only on the religious plane. The truly religious person, according to Jesus, should not lay up treasures on earth; he should sell whatever he has and give to the poor, so that he may have treasures in heaven. Jesus thought it was extremely difficult for the rich men to enter the kingdom of heaven.[56]

Both Vaishṇavism and Christianity, though preaching the love and service of man, attach highest importance to the love and service of God. In one place Jesus tells his disciples to prefer being serviceable to him: 'For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.' (Mk. XIV. 7). This observation was made when a woman, out of love and respect for Christ, had poured a boxful of precious ointment on him. That ointment, said others, 'might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor'. The spectacle of Jesus the God Incarnate competing with the poor for attention and service is not very edifying. Vaishṇava writers, however, emphasize the superiority of love for God in a different way. Tulasīdāsa counsels as follows:

[56] St. Paul likewise observes; 'Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God'. (ICO. III. 18-19).

He who loves not Rāma and Sītā.
Leave him as a confirmed enemy,
Even if he be very dear otherwise.

Prahlāda abandoned his father, Vibhīshaṇa his brother, Bharata his mother;

Bali forsook his teacher, the women of Braja their husbands—and they were all blessed.

The relationship with friends and masters should be observed only through that with Rāma. . . .

Says Tulasī, that person alone is our well-wisher, he alone is dear to us and worthy of respect, who is instrumental in our attaining devotion to Rāma's feet.[57]

In a similar vein Christ in one place exclaims:

'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.' (Mk. III. 35).

Christian Salvation

There is a negative and a positive conception of salvation to be met with in the Christian tradition. Negatively, salvation is equivalent to redemption. In the *O.T.* God is described as being the Redeemer of His people; He also redeems man from sin. This latter idea gains prominence in the *N.T.* Christ sacrificed himself to redeem his followers from sin. Full deliverance of man is a "gift of grace" bestowed by God, through Christ, on man. Salvation, or man's highest good, is 'something beyond his power to attain.'[58] In some manner 'mediated to man through Jesus', salvation is variously described as consisting in man's being reconciled to God, i.e. in his restoration to divine sonship, as his redemption from sin, as his restoration to the fellowship of God, etc. Liberal Christianity tends to emphasize the this-worldly aspects of salvation as well; some modern Christian thinkers have also broached the concept of universal salvation. They have stressed the belief in the ultimate salvation of all men, thus denying a widespread orthodox insistence upon the everlasting punishment of the wicked.[59]

[57] *Vinaya-patrikā*, 174.
[58] *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 640.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 683.

Philosophically, the Christian salvation resembles the *Mukti* of the Vaishṇava thinkers in that it consists in man's attainment of blessedness through fellowship or association with God or Godhead. *Salvation can in no sense be regarded as a flowering of man's own essential nature.* In regard to this Thomas Aquinas, voicing his criticism of the Stoics, writes as follows:

> Likewise there are, or were, others, as the Stoics, who said that blessedness and happiness lay in interior goods. They said that to have virtues and knowledge was the highest good, and their opinion is condemned in Jeremias: *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man in his strength.* Why? Because whatever is within you is subject to your nature, but that which makes you blessed ought to be above you, and so the text goes on: *But let him that glorieth glory in this,* that he *understandeth and knoweth me.*[60]

The reasoning of Aquinas is diametrically opposed to that of the founders of philosophic Hinduism, who argued that, since no entity can abandon its essential nature, *moksha* cannot consist in the addition to the soul of something that is foreign or external to it. The Christian view is also inconsistent with the Greek emphasis on the cultivation of knowledge and virtue. Even the Vaishṇava thinkers attached greater importance to knowledge and virtue than their Christian counterparts.

Attitude Towards Mysticism and Philosophy

We may now compare the official attitudes of Vaishṇavism and Christianity towards mysticism and philosophy. It may be stated at once that the attitude of Vaishṇavism towards both mystics and philosophers has been one of friendliness and appreciation. The *Bhagavadgītā*, one of the most important scriptures of the Bhāgavata religion, has the greatest regard for the man of wisdom. Knowledge comes for praise in the *Śvetāśvatara Up.* where it is said: 'When men will be able to wrap around them empty space like a piece of leather, then alone it will be possible for pain to be eradicated without *knowing* the Divine.' As adhering to the doctrine of monism

[60] *Thomas Aquinas, Selected Writings* (Everyman, 1943), "The Feast of All Saints", p. 18 (Italics in original).

the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* praises the man of knowledge in many places. The *Gītā* expressly declares that the devotee who is also a man of knowledge and wisdom is extremely dear to the Lord.[61]

Mysticism implies, among other things, a direct communion with the Ultimate. Such communion is the ultimate goal of every true devotee. No scripture can claim to mediate between the Lord and the devotee; through *bhakti* the devotee expects to have God's nature directly revealed to him. Hinduism in general, and the different sects of Hinduism such as Vaishṇavism, Śaivism and even Sikhism in particular, emphasized the importance of the teacher (*guru*) immediately available to the aspirant, the former being sometimes looked upon as the medium of the latter's contact with God. However, even the aspirant who had chosen a particular person as *guru* did not deny the spiritual greatness of other teachers, past and present. In general, Hinduism has believed in the capacity of religious geniuses of outstanding merit to have direct realization of the Supreme. Under the influence of monistic philosophical creeds, the followers of different sects have tended to look upon their teachers as incarnations of this or that god, if not of Godhead itself. Thus Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, etc. are each looked upon as incarnation of some god. Geniuses in other fields such as the great grammarian Patañjali, are also sometimes regarded as incarnations of one or other god.

The masses of Vaishṇava devotees, belonging to different sub-sects of Vaishṇavism, however, have been rather indifferent to the niceties of philosophical thought and distinctions. As we have already stated, even the educated devotees have been more interested in the perusal of such Vaishṇava treatises as the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Rāmacharita-mānasa* than in the reading of the philosophical texts of their respective sects. Only the Advaita-Vedāntins, most of whom belonged to the class of higher intellectuals, showed interest in reading philosophical texts of their school. Even such Advaitins did not remain unaffected by the surging wave of devotional theism that swept over the country during the later middle ages. It is interesting to note that the great author of the *Advaita-siddhi*, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, wrote an important work on *bhakti*, *Śrībhagavad-bhakti-rasāyana,* which abounds in quotations from the *Bhāgavata.*

In the above respects the attitude of Christianity has been more

[61] *Bhagavadgītā,* VII. 17

or less diametrically opposed to that of Vaishṇavism. Christianity, believing exclusively in the authority of the Bible, whose doctrinal pronouncements about world and God were much too definite to admit of subtle philosophical interpretations, and in the exclusive mediating role of Church or Christ, did not find it congenial to encourage either philosophy or mysticism. In the history of Christianity, from the viewpoint of the masses of followers, the more important leaders have been either the Popes and Bishops who controlled the Church or churches, or reformers like Luther, Calvin and others. Referring to reformation in the sixteenth century Bevan observes that it was 'by far the most momentous event in the history of Christianity since the conversion of the Roman Empire.'[62] Neither the conversion nor the reformation would be considered important by Hindu or Vaishṇava standards; the importance of both these events consisted in their impact on large numbers of people, rather than in their effecting any marked qualitative improvement of the human spirit. In India, a truly great religious event would coincide with the appearance of a great religious or religio-philosophic personality such as a Rāmānuja, a Kabīra or a Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa. Hinduism has always honoured such personages more than even her heroic defenders like Dayānanda and Rām Mohan Roy.

There are two dogmas of Christianity that set it in opposition to mysticism, i.e. the dogma of original sin and that of the mediatorship of Christ or Church. Mysticism believes in the implicit divinity of man and in direct communion between man and God. Idealistic philosophy, too, more or less emphasizes these or kindred principles, seeking to express them in a rational form. This accounts for the hostility of the Church and also of the Reformers to both idealistic thought and mysticism. And yet most of the philosophy that Christianity developed derived either from Plato or from Aristotle; Christian mysticism likewise drew inspiration from Platonism and Neo-Platonism.

Among the early Christian philosophers were Clement (c. 150-215) and Origen (A. D. 185-254) of Alexandria. Both were admirers of Greek thought, and incorporated Greek elements in their religio-philosophical world views. Clement expressed the belief that divine revelation was progressive and continuous and had been operative before the preaching of the Gospel. This meant

[62] *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

attaching improtance to Greek philosophers and their teachings. Origen gave a new meaning to the Johannian identification of Christ with the Word. He taught that God was higher than Christ, the latter being but an image of the word or Logos that had always been with God. According to this new interpretation Word is identified with Reason which latter is conceived as being the seat of the Ideas or the intelligible patterns after which the objects of the world have been created. Thus Origen combined the Stoic notion of Logos with the Platonic doctrine of intelligible Forms or Ideas.

Origen was also inclined to interpret the story of Genesis or Creation and those of Christ's birth and crucifixion allegorically; these tendencies logically lead to the idea of an eternal and immanent Trinity. Displeased with the bold innovations of the Alexandrian thinkers including Clement and Origen, the Church refused to bestow on them the titles of saints. At a later date the Church condemned the writings of J. Scotus Erigena (800-880 A. D.) who, in the spirit of Origen, had dismissed beliefs in eternal damnation and material hell as childish. The mystic Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) was similarly condemned after his death by the Pope. In him, too, the Neo-Platonic element preponderated over the Christian. Among Christian philosophers influenced by Platonic tradition St. Augustine is the one greatly honoured by the Church; among philosophers influenced by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas occupies the most important place in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. The secret of Augustine's success with the Church has been well explained by Thomas Aquinas in the following words: "Whenever Augustine, who was imbued with the doctrines of the Platonists, found in their teaching anything consistent with faith, he adopted it; and those things which he found contrary to faith he amended."[63] While drawing liberally on the Platonic and the Neo-Platonic tradition in philosophy Augustine yet succeeds in saving the letter of the Bible regarding such matters as creation of the world, Trinity and eternal damnation. Aquinas likewise made himself acceptable to the Church by clearly recognising the pre-eminence of faith in relation to reason which latter's role was merely that of an auxiliary to the revealed faith.

[63] Quoted by Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (Random House, New York, 1955), p. 70.

In general the Christian tradition has been one of hostility to philosophy and science on the one hand and mysticism on the other. That hostility continues even in our own times. On the one hand Christian scholars are anxious to quote from philosophers and mystics in order to give a respectable appearance to the religion of Christ; on the other, they are anxious to retain the Christian dogma in its primitive and unsophisticated forms. Thus W. R. Inge refers derisively to the heretical mystics who 'have often fancied that they can rise above the son to the Father.'[64] Commending St. Paul as the ideal mystic he observes:

> There is no trace whatever in St. Paul of any aspiration to rise above Christ to the contemplation of the Absolute—to treat Him as only a step in the ladder. This is an error of false Mysticism; the true mystic follows St. Paul in choosing as his ultimate goal the fullness of Christ, and not the emptiness of the undifferentiated Godhead.[65]

Bolder than Inge, Emil Brunner recognises a sharp contrast between mysticism and Christian faith. He finds a witness to this 'fundamental opposition between mysticism and the Christian faith' in Rudolf Otto himself. Brunner has absolutely no patience with those who suggest that the Mediator 'is required by beginners, by simple believers, but that the mystic needs Him no longer'.[66] This attitude to mysticism accords well with the Biblical emphasis on 'the gulf between God and man, the abyss which lies between the Holy God and the sinful creature'.[67] The sinfulness of the creature makes necessary the Incarnation of the son of God through whose mediation alone man can be saved. The startling implication of these dogmas is that even such saintly personages as Meister Eckhart and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa could not have realized God without having their devotion to Him mediated through the agency of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christianity has no room for any prophet other than Jesus Christ; even the greatest religious geniuses, according to it, participate in original sin and so stand in need of redemption through Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

[64] *Christian Mysticism*, (Matheun, London, eighth edition, 1948), p. 57.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[66] *The Mediator*, pp. 110-111, footnote.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

IV

A HUMANISTIC APPRAISAL

Diligent and interested students of religion can discover many a similarity and numerous differences between Christianity on the one hand and the various forms of Hinduism on the other. Whether an investigator will see more similarities or more differences is often a matter of temperament; it also depends on the aim and purpose inspiring the investigator. Hindu scholars and writers in general are enamoured of the metaphysical concept of 'unity in diversity'; they are also wedded to the ideals of tolerance and synthesis. They, therefore, tend to discover and emphasize "The Essential Unity of All Religions".[1] On the other hand missionary authors with proselytizing zeal generally tend to accentuate the differences obtaining between their religion and those professed by others. An impartial student studying different societies and civilizations, however, is bound to discover two important facts about them: first, the societies and civilizations exhibit many similarities in belief and in practice particularly during their earlier stages; secondly, during the course of history, different societies have developed at different paces and in different degrees. This latter phenomenon necessitates critical scrutiny of the development and growth, stagnation or decline of the different societies in different directions; it also makes it desirable to formulate criteria for assessing the historical course of various societies and social institutions.

In so far as human beings everywhere are endowed with similar instincts and powers and are subject to the pressure of similar needs physical, mental and emotional, they tend to entertain similar fears, beliefs and superstitions and to adopt more or less similar practices both in secular and religious spheres. This

[1] This is the title of a famous work by a recent Indian philosopher, Dr. Bhagavān Das.

accounts for the essential similarity of outlook and for practices with kindred meanings to be met with in primitive societies. From the matrix of the primitive mentality, however, there develop different societies with different degrees of sophistication in outlook and beliefs, which gradually lead to the modification of their institutional practices. The processes by which societies move towards different stages of sophistication consist essentially in the application of reason in the domains of both belief and practice; these processes also constitute the criteria whereby the degree of growth or progress of a society in a particular field may be assessed.

Prima facie there are significant similarities between different forms of Christianity and Hinduism. Like Brāhmanical or ritualistic Hinduism Roman Catholicism encourages faith in miraculous power of sacraments, images, holy water, relics, etc. Hinduism in its popular form inculcates respect for the Brāhmins in general and for holy personages, ascetics and saints in particular. Roman Catholicism too enjoins respect for the Church or the persons associated with it, and also recommends the worship of the saints. As against ritualistic, priest-ridden Hinduism, Vaishṇavism and other forms of devotional theism advocated simpler forms of worship directed mainly towards the single Godhead. The *Bhagavadgītā* clearly discourages the worship of many gods and goddesses. Lord Kṛishṇa observes:

> With their understanding clouded by different desires they approach different other gods, under the impulsion of their differing natures. Whatever deity or god a devotee (craving for different worldly objects) seeks to worship with faith, I stabilise the faith of that particular devotee in that very god or deity. Equipped with such faith he worships that deity and obtains through him without doubt the fulfilment of his desires as ordained by Me. However, the fruits gained by these people of meagre intelligence are perishable. The worshippers of gods attain the gods, whereas my devotees, in the end, attain Me alone.

Commenting on the last stanza Śaṅkarāchārya remarks that the Lord expresses pity for those who, on account of their poor understanding, worship minor gods and goddesses thereby earning perishable benefits.[2]

[2] Vide, *Bhagavadgītā* Ch. VII. 20-23 and Śaṅkara's commentary thereon.

During the middle ages, when there was a country-wide revival of the devotional creeds, the saintly reformers like Ḳabīra, Nānaka and others advocated return to the spirit of essentialism in religion involving inner attachment to God and the abandonment of ritualistic paraphernalia in the worship of the Godhead. A similar return to simplicity in the worship of the Deity and of Christ was prescribed by the various Protestant reformers.

Here some important differences between Vaishṇavism and other devotional cults in their varied forms and Protestant Christianity may be noted. While breaking with Roman Catholicism, the Reformers retained staunch faith in the Bible — "the impregnable rock of God's Word"—and in such characteristic Christian doctrines as that of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. They also retained belief in the doctrine of the Fall and in the Augustinian view of the transmission to all men of Original Sin; they continued to subscribe to the doctrine of eternal damnation. Thus Article IX of the Church of England states, 'Man . . . is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore every person born into this world, deserveth God's wrath and damnation.'[3] The Reformers also 'retained belief in the Atonement wrought by the Blood of Jesus. They retained, finally, belief that the New Testament writings of infallible inspiration were precisely the twenty seven . . . '.[4]

Vaishṇavism differed from Protestant Christianity in respect of almost all the above dogmas. In contrast with Protestant Christianity, Vaishṇavism never repudiated belief in the numerous Hindu gods and goddesses. While emphasizing one-pointed devotion to single Godhead (*ekāntikā bhakti*), it still never openly disowned other gods and goddesses; nor did it protest against their worship by the Vaishṇavas. Both in its ritualistic and in its devotional forms, Hinduism remains more polytheistic than Christianity. Secondly, Vaishṇavism did not show any exclusive partiality for the ancient Hindu Scriptures. The Indian tradition laid greater emphasis on dependence on the *Guru* (the spiritual teacher) and his word than on a particular text. Thirdly, Vaishṇavism continued to adhere to the principle of *karma,* which presents a thorough contrast to the doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin. The doctrine under reference, indeed, is wholly foreign to the spirit of Hinduism in all

[3] Quoted by Edwyn Bevan, *Christianity,* p. 157, fn.

[4] *Loc. cit.*

its forms. The Vaishṇava doctrine of grace, therefore, is not quite the same as that accepted by devout Christians. The Vaishṇava God cannot so much absolve man from the consequences of sin as deliver him from the inclination to sin. This is clearly implied by the following statement of Lord Kṛishṇa:

> Even if a vile sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be considered a worthy person, for he has (now) taken the right resolve. Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Be assured, O Arjuna, that my devotee never suffers ruin.[5]

The Hindu acceptance of the law of *karma* results in another emphasis, i.e. in the view that man himself is largely responsible for his lot, and that he can shape his destiny by his own moral and spiritual effort. In the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* we read:

> None else brings to us either sorrow or joy, it is a wrong notion that these are brought to us by others. Whatever we do is united by its appropriate fruit. O body of mine, suffer the consequences of the deeds done by thee.[6]

The same idea is expressed by Tulasīdāsa in the following verse: 'None else gives us either joy or sorrow; all the creatures suffer the consequences of their own doings.'[7] Elsewhere the same poet observes that 'The universe is so ordered that here *karma* is the dominant factor.'[8] We may remember here that Tulasīdāsa is a great Vaishṇava saint and poet and a great believer in the creed of devotion and the grace of God. The *karma* doctrine, in fact, remains pivotal to Hinduism in all its forms; together with the concept of emancipation or *moksha* it constitutes the core and essence of the Hindu religious doctrine.

[5] *Bhagavadgītā*, IX. 30-31

[6] *Sukhasya duḥkhasya na ko'pi dātā,*
Paro dadāt-īti ku-buddhir-eshā;
Svayaṁ kṛitaṁ svena phalena yujyate,
Śarīra he, nistara yat tvayā kṛitam.
Quoted by Dr. Bhagavān Das, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

[7] *Nahi koū sukha-dukha kara dātā;*
Nija kṛita bhoga karahin saba tātā.
(*Ayodhyākāṇḍa*)

[8] *Karma-pradhāna viśva kari rākhā*

Hindu and Christian Ethics

This leads us to the consideration of some aspects of the Hindu and Christian ethical thought. The principle of *karma* tends to emphasize the autonomous character of the realm of morality. While the Naiyāyikas, like Kant, argued for the existence of God as the Dispenser of rewards and punishments to creatures in accordance with their moral deserts, the Jainas and the Buddhists considered the Moral Law to be a self-operating force which did not depend in its workings on any outside agency. Even the Hindu writers are not always inclined to attach too much importance to the activity of God as the moral dispenser. According to the Mīmāṁsakas our actions generate a force or property called *Apūrva* which brings appropriate fruits at a future date. The Nyāya-Vaiśeshika also recognize such a force or property under the concepts of *dharma-adharma* and *adṛishṭa*. By the use of these concepts Hinduism attempts to give a rational basis and form to its faith in moral retribution.

It is characteristic of Christianity that it does not seek to evolve rational concepts for the explanation of the moral and the religious phenomena. The explanations or psuedo-explanations that it offers are all based on the acceptance of a divine Revelation. It may be added here that the moral ideas and ideals of Hinduism, too, were not rationalised completely. Just as for Christians morality is identical with the will of God as revealed in the Bible, so for the orthodox Hindus *dharma* is what is enjoined by the Vedas and by Smṛitis not opposed to the Veda. True, among the sources of *dharma* the smṛitikāras recognize also the conduct of worthy persons and the voice of conscience, but they nowhere discuss the possibilities of conflict among these sources and the theoretical consequences of those conflicts. In general it is true that the moral teachings of the Hindu writers, no less than those of the Jaina and Buddhist authors, failed to reach the level of ethical thought.

Both the Bible and the Hindu Dharmaśāstras lay the greatest emphasis on righteous or moral living. Says Manu: 'If one kills *dharma* (righteousness), *dharma* kills him; protection of *dharma* leads to protection by *dharma*. Therefore, *dharma* should never be killed; may not *dharma*, killed by us, seek to destroy us . . . *dharma* is the only friend which follows us even in death; everything else dies with the death of the body'.[9] The *Bible* likewise enjoins : 'Thou shalt do that which is

[9] *Manusmriti*, VII. 15, 17

right and good in the sight of the Lord : that it may be well with thee.'[10] We also read : 'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death;' and 'the Lord . . . heareth the prayer of the righteous.'[11] The morality taught by the Bible is essentially social. The Prophets of Israel were concerned mainly to improve the morals of the society in which they lived and preached. According to the Bible the first great duty of man is to love God; his second most important duty is to love his neighbour.

The Hindu writers, including the philosophers and Vaishṇava authors, prefer to stress the importance of the attitude of non-hostility. This is not to say that the concepts of service and love are unknown to them. In fact, the religious writers of India considered the highest service that could be rendered to suffering mankind to consist in the dissemination of spiritual wisdom. Further, the attitude of compassion is generally supposed to characterize the religious man. The Vaishṇavas in particular attach the greatest importance to the practice of compassion. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* we read :

> By any means available the wise man should try to bring satisfaction or happiness to any creature whatever ; that is equivalent to the worship of God. Frequently good persons suffer on account of the sufferings of the people ; that is the highest worship of the Lord who constitutes the self of all beings. The desire to do good to creatures—this is *dharma* for all castes. The Light residing in all selves is the same in all creatures.[12]

Prima facie it may appear that the ethics of love is superior to the ethics of non-hostility and even that of compassion. But that is not so. One can endeavour to love one's enemies only after one has learnt that some persons are one's enemies. But the metaphysics of monism requires that we refuse to look upon anybody as being an enemy in relation to us. The Vaishṇava (and the Vedāntic) insistence on the presence of the same Godhead or *Brahman* in all creatures is inconsistent with harbouring enmity towards any living being, and with looking upon any creature as being hostile to oneself. The Vedāntic sage and the Vaishṇava devotee, who learn to

[10] De., VI. 18
[11] Pr., X. 2; XV. 29
[12] Translation of the text quoted by Dr. Bhagavan Das, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

look upon all creatures as being embodiments or manifestations of Divinity, are not likely to suffer from the pride of being friendly towards their enemies—for they cannot afford to divide themselves from other beings.

However, on the plane of social living, Christian morality seems to be superior to that advocated by the Hindu writers. Vaishṇava writers were generally not concerned to lay down for the people rules of social behaviour in detail. For the Hindu community, this had been accomplished by Manu and other authors of the Dharmaśāstras. But these authors believe in the order of castes and they recommend relatively harsher treatment for the Śūdras and other lower castes. On the other hand the ethics of the *O.T.*, which resembles the Dharmaśāstras in paying detailed attention to relations among various groups of people, manifests greater concern for the poor and the oppressed and breathes the socialistic spirit. Thus Hosiah condemns the dishonest trader: 'He is a merchant, the balances of deceit *are* in his hand: he loveth to oppress'. (XII. 7) Isaiah is indignant with the rulers and their daughters who love luxury and behave haughtily.

> The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with...the princes ...for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.
>
> Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. (III. 13-17).

The last sentence is indicative of the violent nature of God as conceived in the *O.T.* The *N.T.*, on the whole, recommends gentler virtues, but the main parts of it do not concern themselves with the details of the social morality. In this respect works like the *Manusmṛiti* treat of morality in a more comprehensive manner than the Old and the New Testaments taken separately. On the whole it seems that the Hindu writers were acquainted with larger number of virtues and with finer forms of some virtues that find

expression in social life. One of the virtues recommended by the authors of the Dharmasūtras and the Smṛitis is absence of *asūyā*, i.e. the propensity to ignore or underrate the merit of a person or his work. The Hindu authors also make a detailed mention of the virtue of self-control, i.e. the control of the mind and the senses. The stress on this virtue is a pervasive feature of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina works on morality and religion. Authors like Manu, not only strongly advocate the control of the senses (Ch. II. 88), but also proceed to enumerate the different senses that are to be controlled (II. 90-92). The virtue of non-injury or non-violence also receives a detailed analytical treatment at the hands of these writers. Thus, the *Bhagavadgītā* enumerates three kinds of *tapas* or austerity; it describes *ahiṁsā* or non-injury as the austerity of the body. It then proceeds to define austerity of speech in the following words: 'Unoffensive, truthful, agreeable and helpful speech and the study of the sacred texts,' etc. Here one element of *ahiṁsā* is included under the spiritual discipline of speech. Elsewhere we may find the injunction to observe *ahiṁsā* by body, mind and speech. In both the *O.T.* and the *N.T.* the teaching of morality is mixed up with stories and anecdotes. Important works dealing purely with the teaching of morality and religion, or religious morality, comparable to the *Dhammapada* and the *Gītā* and even the *Manusmṛiti* are rare in Christian literature. The *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis is one such work; but even there one does not find such detailed analysis of the different virtues as we find in the aforesaid Hindu works.

One surprising omission in the lists of virtues mentioned in the Bible and other Christian works is the virtue of truthfulness. By truth the *N.T.* generally means the truth of the doctrine or the truth of Christ's teaching. Thus we read in 2 Jn. I. 2: 'I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in the truth.' And again: 'Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my desciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'. (Jn. VIII. 31-32).

In a well-known śloka (VI. 92) enumerating ten constituents of *dharma*, Manu mentions three allied virtues, viz. cultivation of intelligence (*dhīḥ*), study of the śāstras or scientific subjects (according to Kullūka Bhaṭṭa), acquisition of *Vidyā* (self-knowledge according to K. Bhatta), and *Satya* or truthfulness (right recognition and reporting). In the Upanishads special importance is

attached to the virtue of truthfulness. 'Truth alone prevails or is victorious,' is a well-known saying in an Upanishad. The *Yoga-sūtra* includes *satya* or truthfulness among the five *yamas* which are virtues to be universally practised. It will not be difficult to collect several hundred statements from the epics, the dharmaśāstras and the Purāṇas recommending or extolling the virtue of truthfulness.

In the Indian tradition we find the greatest emphasis being laid on the cultivation of knowledge. This is in keeping with the philosophic bent of the Indian mind. The Christian religion, instead, lays emphasis on the cultivation of *faith* which is also one of the cardinal virtues according to Christianity. Faith is to be directed on God, and also on the doctrine of Christ. This emphasis on faith tends to dilute and weaken both the Christian teaching of morality and the Christian quest of truth and wisdom. The Bible condemns unrighteous conduct, it equally condemns lack of faith in God and the teachings of the prophets. Christian writers, indeed, *do not seem able to decide which to condemn more, unrighteousness or absence of faith.* As a matter of historical practice, the Christian Church has been more concerned to punish the heretics and the non-believers than the unrighteous. Frequently its insistence on the uncritical acceptance of this or that belief has led it to penalize innocent men and women suspected of heresy and honest investigators daring to publish opinions not in conformity with the pronouncements of the Bible or the Church.

The *Bible* itself seems to condemn unbelief and idolatry as much as unrighteousness. In fact, as regards the denunciation and the condemnation of numerous undesirable attitudes and practices, the *Bible* including the *N.T.* betrays an utter lack of the sense of proportion. Both the teaching and practice of the ethics of love is seriously compromised by the irrational or the anti-rational bias of the Christian doctrine and the Christian Church. Not believing in any such saving doctrine as the principle of *Karma,* and committed to believe literally in the doctrine of original sin, St. Augustine was compelled to assert that 'all babies dying unbaptized would burn forever in Hell.'[13] St. Augustine (the master both of Aquinas and of Calvin)[14] also encouraged persecution of divergent opinion. Bevan writes :

Almost immediately after having undergone persecution itself,

[13] Edwin Bevan, *Christianity,* p. 102.
[14] E. E. Kellett, *A Short History of Religions,* p. 233.

the Church began to instigate the rulers of the world to persecute on its behalf. It was not only against Paganism that the Christian rulers used the arm of the state, it was against forms of Christianity which the predominant Church regarded as heretical. The use of force to suppress divergent opinion has marked the history of Christianity down to modern times. Here again the great figure of St. Augustine appears on the threshold of Medieval Christianity in a sinister light. His authority more than any helped to establish persecution as a principle; he found sanction for it in the words of Jesus,' "*Compel* them to come in." (Luke, XIV. 23)[15]

How the Christian practice of love suffered restriction and was compromised by its insistence on dogma is illustrated by the amusing behaviour of some of the Christian saints in relation to the heretics. St. Jerome described the 'noble-minded heathen' Porphery as: 'a fool, impious, a blasphemer, mad, shameless, a slanderer of the Church, a mad dog attacking Christ.'[16] It is interesting to note that St. Augustine thought Porphery to be 'a great and noble philosopher, the most learned of gentile thinkers.'[17] Kellett records how the author of the Epistle of John (which beautifully comments on the text 'love one another'), 'being at the bath and hearing that the heretic Cerinthus was on the premises rushed out rather than see him.' Similarly: 'The noble-minded Marcion meeting his old friend Polycarp after many years went up to him and said "Don't you know me Polycarp?" "Yes," answered the saint, "I know you, the first born of Satan". Since they had last met, Marcion had been promulgating opinions which there is no reason to believe he did not honestly hold, but with which Polycarp did not agree. Why waste politeness on heretics?'[18]

The teaching 'Love your enemies,' obviously, was not intended to be put in practice in relation to persons holding opinions different from those of the ruling Church. Even the Christian God, who professes in the *Bible* to be the Father of all mankind, is not supposed to be kind to the non-believers. St. Augustine believed that while God was merciful to mere moral wickedness, He could not

[15] *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-108
[16] E. E. Kellett, *op. cit.*, p. 274
[17] *Loc. cit.*, footnote.
[18] *Ibid*, p. 206.

extend forgiveness for intellectual error. Commenting on persecutions by early Church Kellet writes :

> The chief weapon was excommunication, and chief excuse for excommunication was 'heresy'. One cannot quite lay the invention of this sin to the sole charge of Christianity: it existed among the Jews and the Persians had something like it; but it is safe to say that Christianity carried the idea to a height utterly unknown before, and that the principle on which Christianity acted for hundreds of years, that an intellectual error is a crime to be punished by spiritual penalties in this world and by eternal torture in the next, almost counterbalances the benefits she had brought upon the world.

'Nothing', continues the same author, 'astonished and disgusted the tolerant Romans more than this. Calsus, for instance, speaks with just indignation of the fury with which a heretic—that is, a man whose opinions differed from those of the majority—was pursued by those who professed a religion of love.' "They slander one another with all sorts of charges mentionable and unmentionable, refusing to yield the smallest point for the sake of concord, and hating one another with a perfect hatred."[19]

Intolerance of other faiths also characterized some of the Vaishṇava writers—although, in India, facilities for the persecution of one sect by the other did not exist. The Vaishṇava intolerance occasionally expressed itself in the invention of mythological stories calculated to malign the rival creeds. In particular, some Vaishṇava writings exhibit great intolerance of the Jaina and Buddhist faiths. While inventing mythical tales the authors show no hesitation in attributing mean motives to God Vishṇu himself, which illustrates again how sectarian dogmatism may lead to the distortion of moral perception. Here is such a story, directed against the Jainas and the Buddhists, from the *Vishṇu-purāṇa*. Afraid of the growing power of the *Daityas* (sons of Diti, usually thought to be demons), the gods approached Vishṇu for protection against them. 'Although both we and they are all parts of Thee (or born of thee) who art the soul of all, still on account of ignorance, we both look at the world differently. Our enemies follow the duties of their respective castes, they follow the path of the Veda and are given to austerities ;

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

hence, it is not possible for us to kill them. Therefore, O Soul of all, give to us the means whereby we may be able to kill them.' Lord Vishṇu responded to their call, produced a certain creature called Māyāmoha from his body and said, "This Māyāmoha will delude all the Daityas and thus render them vulnerable." The mischievous teaching of Māyāmoha resulted in the emergence of the creeds of Jainism of the Digambaras and Vijñānavāda Buddhism ![20]

Such stories scarcely do any credit either to the Vaishṇavas or to their God. They are also opposed to the general faith of the Hindus that God seeks to punish only the unrighteous and that the Vedas cannot purify the unrighteous.[21]

Vaishṇava writers and thinkers laying emphasis on the cultivation of devotion towards God, have not been noteworthy for the spirit of inquiry or intellectual quest. If we still find plenty of philosophical speculations in such Vaishṇava works as the *Bhāgavata*, it is due largely to the influence of the classical philosophical tradition particularly that of Sāṅkhya and Advaita Vedānta. The only important thinker produced by Vaishṇavism is Rāmānuja. Madhva and some of his followers were great dialecticians, but they scarcely made any significant addition to constructive philosophical thought of the Hindus. Christianity too can boast of but a few names in medieval philosophy who can at all compare with the great Greek and modern philosophers of Europe ; probably, Thomas Aquinas is the only thinker who can rank with Descartes and Spinoza, Locke and Hume. He certainly cannot rank with Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Hegel.

The history of human civilization attests the fact that the progress made by man in different spheres has been correlated with the spirit of intellectual quest and adventure. A people not impelled by the spirit of inquiry and the passion for truth are seldom able to make important contributions to the growth and progress of the human spirit. The state of innocence may be helpful in promoting morality in the life of a child and that of a primitive society, but it can hardly prove conducive to higher moral life in sophisticated and civilized societies. This is the reason why the Christian Church, bereft of the spirit of inquiry and the concern for truth, could not observe in practice the simple and charming

[20] *V. P.*, III. Ch. 18.

[21] Cp. *Āchārahīnam na punanti Vedāḥ*

precepts of Jesus in the complex environment of the later Roman empire, the middle ages and the modern Europe. In the long run its lack of concern for truth and unfriendly attitude towards inquiry led to the development of hypocrisy, crookedness and cruelty in her dealings with men and women suspected of the practice of magic and witchcraft and of holding and propagating divergent opinion.

In his important, revealing and instructive study entitled *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom,*[22] Prof. Andrew D. White, a well-meaning and honest Christian, patiently records a thousand painful facts associated with the Church's persecution of devoted scientific investigators and her crusade against scientific truth. Even the most intelligent writers and thinkers, and the most pious saints credited with having had a direct vision of God, believed literally in the teachings of the *Bible*—regarding the Creator and the manner, matter, time and date of creation; regarding the chronology of the appearance of different entities living and non-living, the forms of the earth and the planets, animals and men; etc., etc. Gradually, as the sciences of geography and geology, astronomy and physics, chemistry and biology, archaeology, anthropology and ethnology including Egyptology and Assyriology, history, meteorology, medicine, etc. emerged and made advances, the biblical beliefs began to look to be more and more unfounded and unreasonable and in some cases ridiculous. It will be instructive to mention here a few instances of glaring conflict between the statements of the *Bible* and the clear indications of the sciences contrary to those statements. Following the Book of Genesis, Christian scholars had believed that God produced the world in six days either with his hands or by his oral commandment. St. Augustine thought God finished his work in six days because six is a perfect number. Others believed both that God created the universe in six days, and also that He brought it all into existence in a moment. St. Thomas Aquinas 'taught in effect that God created the substance of things in a moment, but gave to the work of separating, shaping and adorning this creation, six days.'[23] These matters may appear to be too trivial for serious discussion and controversy to us today, but that was not so during the middle ages. The exact date of creation was also sought to be

[22] Published by George Braziller, New York, 1955.
[23] *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology,* Vol. I, pp. 7-8.

seriously ascertained. To quote White : '... the general conclusion arrived at by an overwhelming majority of the most competent students of the biblical accounts was that the date of creation was, in round numbers, four thousand years before our era'.[24] Dr. John Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge and "one of the most eminent Hebrew scholars of his time", declared "as the result of his most profound and exhaustive study of the Scriptures", that the world and man were created by the Trinity on October 23, four thousand four B.C., at nine O' clock in the morning ! Ironically enough, within two centuries of Lightfoot's famous biblical demonstration as to the exact hour of creation evidence began to pour in from different sources upsetting completely the chronology suggested in the *Bible*. It was discovered, e.g., by scholars that at the alleged time of creation the land of Egypt was inhabited by highly civilized people living in flourishing cities. Later on the biblical account was made to appear utterly ridiculous by the findings of geology.

The biblical theory of creation also clashed with the evolutionary theories that became increasingly popular from the sixteenth century onwards. One of the earlier protagonists of the evolutionary view in modern times was the philosopher Giordano Bruno, who was burnt alive by the Inquisition[25] at Rome in sixteen hundred A. D. Later on the evolutionary view of the physical universe found support in Immanuel Kant and Laplace; it was supplemented and reinforced by the theories of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century.

Several agencies conspired to render untenable the biblical account of the creation and preservation of the different species of living creatures. According to the *Bible* all the animals had been created in the beginning, named by Adam, and preserved in Noah's Ark at the time of the great flood. This account gave rise to certain difficulties. In his *City of God*, St. Augustine stated some of the difficulties in the following words : 'But there is a question about all these kinds of beasts which are neither tamed by man nor spring from the earth like frogs, such as wolves and others of

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[25] 'The organised system of searching out the heretics known as Inquisition was founded by Pope Gregory IX about A.D. 1233, and fully established by a Bull of Innocent IV (A.D. 1252) which regulated the machinery of persecution "as an integral part of the social edifice in every city and every state". '(J.B. Bury, *A History of Freedom of Thought*, Home University Library, 1944, p. 57.

that sort. . . as to how they could find their way to the islands after that flood which destroyed every living thing not preserved in the Ark',[26] etc. The difficulties multiplied as more and more species of animals were discovered by voyagers like Columbus, Vasco de Gama and others. As the science of Zoology progressed, ever increasing numbers of species came to be revealed. During the Middle Ages the difficulties were partly surmounted by making the ark of Noah larger and larger. Obviously, such makeshifts could not count for genuine solutions. It may be noted here that the *Purāṇas* of the Hindus are also full of fanciful stories regarding the creation of planets and stars and different animals. However, these stories were not taken seriously by the better students of philosophy or by those who seriously pursued the religious goal of salvation. In one place Śaṅkarāchārya observes : "Nothing can be gained by the knowledge of the story or stories about creation; the one piece of knowledge that counts for salvation is that concerning the reality of one *Ātman*—as all the Upanishads aver."[27]

Christianity was also alarmed at the emergence and growth of the science of medicine. In the *New Testament* there are frequent references to the "casting out" of devils from suffering individuals by Jesus. The notion that diseases are caused by spirits and demons was widely current in the Christian world. The great Christian theologian Origen said, 'It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruptions of the air, pestilences, they hover concealed in clouds in the lower atmosphere, and are attracted by the blood and incense which the heathen offer to them as gods.'[28] St. Augustine likewise stated: 'All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to these demons; chiefly do they torment fresh-baptized Christians, yea, even the guiltless new born infants.'[28] St. Bernard is reported to have warned certain monks that 'to seek relief from disease in medicine was in harmony neither with the religion nor with the honour and purity of their order.'[28] This view was incorporated into the canon law which declared the precepts of medicine to be "contrary to Divine knowledge.'[28]

[26] Quoted by A.D. White, *op. cit.*, p.45

[27] *Na hi sṛishṭy ākhyāyikādi-parijñānāt kiñcit phalam ishyate; aikātmya-svarūpa parijñānāt tu amṛitatvam phalam sarvopanishat-prasiddham.*

Introduction to *Bhāshya* on *Aitareya Up.* Ch. II. Commenting on *Chhāndogya Up.* Ch. VI. 2.3. he observes : Alternatively (it may be said that) the order of creation is not meant to be taken literally (*avivakshita iha sṛishṭikramaḥ*).

[28] See A. D. White, *op. cit.*, Vol. II. pp. 21-27

During the Middle Ages every cathedral, every abbey and nearly every parish church kept a stock of healing relics, which brought enormous revenues to the Church. Any attempt to show that diseases arose from natural causes and not from the malice of the devil was frowned upon. About the beginning of the thirteenth century the Lateran Council 'forbade physicians under pain of exclusion from Church to undertake medical treatment without calling in ecclesiastical advice.'[29] In the eighteenth century there was widespread opposition to inoculation being a survival of the medieval view of disease. As late as in 1847 A.D. when James Young Simpson advocated the use of chloroform for performing an operation, he was denounced by the Church. In 1591 A.D. a lady of rank, Eufame Macalyane, was *burnt alive* on the ground that she had sought medical aid in the form of the use of an anaesthetic for relief from pain at the time of the birth of her two sons.

The Church's opposition to the astronomical theories of Copernicus and Galileo is well known. But it is not so widely known that the theologians offered bitter opposition to Newton, a deeply religious man, who had shown that the universe was governed not by the caprice of an almighty God but by all-pervading law. It was urged against him that by his statement of the law of gravitation he 'took from God that direct action on his works so constantly ascribed to him in scripture and transferred it to material mechanism', and that he 'substituted gravitation for Providence.'[30]

Rene Descartes, noted in modern philosophy for his proofs for the existence of God, was charged with atheism by the Protestant theologians of Holland, who therefore sought to bring him to torture and to death. However, it was reserved for Galileo to suffer the greatest tortures as a champion of scientific investigations. Alarmed by the successes of Copernican astronomy which Galileo defended one Dominican Father declared that geometry was of the devil and that mathematicians should be banished as the authors of dangerous heresies. The Archbishop of Rome sought to bring Galileo into the clutches of Inquisition by cunningly posing as an admirer of Galileo's genius to his friend Castelli. The device not succeeding, the archbishop threw off the mask and resorted to open attack. White sums up the whole story of the persecution of Galileo by the Church in the following words:

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 37
[30] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 16

To the end of his life—nay, after his life was ended—the persecution of Galileo was continued. He was kept in exile from his family, from his friends, from his noble employments, and was held rigidly to his promise not to speak of his theory. When, in the midst of intense bodily sufferings from disease, and mental sufferings from calamities in his family, he besought some little liberty he was met with threats of committal to a dungeon.... He was forced to bear contemptible attacks on himself and on his works in silence; to see the man who had befriended him severely punished.... He lived to see the truths he had established carefully weeded out from all the Church colleges and universities in Europe; and when in a scientific work he happened to be spoken of as "renowned," the Inquisition ordered the substitution of the word "notorious."[31]

The above facts about persecution by Christianity have been recounted here not because the present speaker is interested in maligning a particular creed but for the reason that he is anxious to stress the importance of rational investigation and thought for the progress of religion including morality and the pursuit of holiness. If the Church, founded to propagate the gospel of such a charming personage as the apostle of the Sermon on the Mount, sank into moral barbarism in its behaviour towards the investigators of truth, it was due mainly to the fact that the teaching 'love thy neighbour as thyself' had not been understood and accepted as a rational truth, i.e. as a truth endorsed by rational insight into the realities of spiritual life and experience. I shall attempt to explain the nature of this insight later. Here it may be noted that the entire edifice of Christian morality had its foundations in the will and commandment of God as interpreted by this or that prophet. From the very outset both Judaism and Christianity discouraged independent thought and encouraged uncritical acceptence of the deliverances of the prophets. In other religions the voice of reason is sought to be silenced in the name of intuitive vision and mystical experience. As against this we are inclined to believe that there is and can be no real opposition between reason understood in the proper sense and experience of any kind including spiritual or mystical experience.

There is another reason why it is necessary for us today to

[31] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 143.

remind ourselves of the anti-rational role that Christianity has played in the history of human civilization; that important reason is that some of the accredited leaders of Christian thought continue to this day to enact that role and to endorse and encourage the uncritical and dogmatic attitude that has been characteristic of Christianity throughout the centuries. The twentieth century, particularly during the decades after the First World War, witnessed a reaction against the liberal theology of the nineteenth century. That theology, as we know, had discouraged belief in miracles and in demons, in the catastrophic end of the world, in original sin, in the doctrines of predestination and irresistible grace, in the eternity of punishment and even in the inerrancy of the Scripture. In early twentieth century these trends in theology were opposed by other movements, such as fundamentalism, within Protestant Christianity. The Fundamentalists were opposed to all science and modern thought. They reaffirmed the dogmas of the infallibility of the *Bible* and the divinity of Christ. They tended to take a legalistic view of personal morality and were distrustful of the 'social gospels' as also of the theories of biological and social evolution. Later on a brilliant group of theologians in Germany, chief among whom were Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Eduard Thurneysen, launched a movement in the defence of the dogmatic trends in Christianity. Their writings continue to be influential and to command following in our own time. The theologians of this camp continue to emphasize the dogmas of original sin and vicarious salvation through Christ. It is interesting to note that after the First World War when depression set in orthodox theologians sought to exploit the situation for reaffirming the doctrine of original sin and the essential depravity of man. Optimistic faith in the dignity and powers of man is considered by these theologians to be inconsistent with the above doctrine.[32] Man's faith in himself and in the possibility of progress through his own efforts may, obviously, lead to the weakening of his sense of

[32] Writing in early thirties Emil Brunner said : '*The worst state of man is that in which he has a complete confidence in himself.*' (*The Divine Imperative*, Eng. Tr. Lutterworth Press, London, 1937, reprinted 1949, p. 77. Italics in the original). In an English work by seven Oxford men that appeared in 1912, Rev. N. S. Talbot wrote in the chapter entitled "The Modern Situation": 'Therefore today is a day of new hope for the Christian religion....After all it presupposed an emergency. It needed a bad day for it to be known as good news....It was first preached to a civilization...darkened in its understanding, "having no hope, and without God in the world". (*Foundations*, Macmillan, reprinted, 1929, p. 18).

dependence upon God. Characterizing descendants of Raghu, Kālidāsa, the greatest poet of Sanskrit, had said, 'They defend themselves by their own strength.' About the emperor Dilīpa, the father of Raghu, he had written: 'The army to him was just an appendage; his real means of achieving ends were only two, a sharp intellect at home with the sciences, and the string tightly fitted over the bow'.[33] As against this the medieval teachers of *bhakti* in India, like their Christian counterparts, preached the gospel of utter dependence on the Deity. The only difference was that these teachers were not committed to belief in any original sin or in the essential depravity of man. The Vedāntic doctrine of the identity of man and God continued, as we have seen, to be echoed even by the *bhakta* philosophers. On the whole the Vaishṇava creed is nearer reason than the Christian doctrine. The Vaishṇavas lay stress on the cultivation of devotional relationship with God. The Protestants eliminated Church as the mediator between God and man; but they have retained faith in the mediatorship of Christ which prejudices direct relationship of the worshipper to his Deity. As a consequence we find Christianity laying greater emphasis on faith than on intimate devotion to and realization of God. Compared to the Vaishṇava view the Christian conception of the relationship between man and God remains external and legalistic.

Some of the Christian mystics affirmed greater intimacy between themselves and God, but their views, on the whole, were not accepted by official Christianity in its several forms. Thus many of the teachings of the great mystic Meister Eckhart were stigmatized as heretical or dangerous by the Papal Bull of 1329.[34] However, true to the fundamental spirit of the Christian doctrine, even Eckhart was, 'careful to make a clear distinction between Creator and creature'.[35]

Here I would like to add some more observations on the nature of reason as I understand it. I do not envisage any conflict whatever

[33] *Raghuvaṁśa*, I. 19

[34] See Meister Eckhar, *Selected Treatises and Sermons*, (The Fontana Library, Faber & Faber, 1963), Introduction, p. 17. Brunner believes that there is a 'fundamental opposition between mysticism and the Christian faith'; he accuses Otto of attempting to 'explain away . . . the essential relation between Eckhart and Śaṅkara and the profound contrast between both and the Christian faith.' (See *The Mediator*, pp. 110-111 footnote.)

[35] *Ibid.* p. 38.

between reason and experience, rationalism and empiricism. In the physical sciences empirical data and rational explanation are closely aligned. I am inclined to define reason as a way of handling experience. When experience is sought to be handled imaginatively and organised through concepts, we witness the operation of reason or the intellect. The creation of such concepts by the intellect or the imagination, in every case, is determined by the character and the extent of experiential material available to investigators at a particular moment in history.

Driven by the demands of our nature we tend to have different kinds of experience and to view those experiences in different lights. There are experiences which count for us at the utilitarian level; there are other experiences which have for us only aesthetic or intellectual significance. According as one interest or the other is aroused in us by a particular series of experiences, we are inclined to use one or other kind of concepts in the organization of the experiences in question. It follows from this that reason or rationality does not have a single, exclusive form; there are as many forms or manifestations of reason as there are ways of viewing the stuff of experience.

The so-called moral phenomena are viewed by us under the aspects of justice and deservedness; the distinctive features of the religious phenomena are, probably, the aspects of detachment and holiness. These traits characterize the attitude and behaviour of the person generally considered to be religious. The detachment practised by the truly religious man makes him indifferent to the competitive goods, e.g. wealth and power, which divide men from one another. Holiness is the mark left on the demeanour and bearing of the person who has successfully practised detachment for a long time. The surest indication of the disposition of holiness in a man is the total absence of bitterness and frustration accompanied by unlimited friendliness and compassion towards all the creatures.

The discipline called philosophy of religion should seek to arrive at a rational understanding of the values comprehended under the concept of holiness. This understanding would consist in the attempt to reconstruct the vision of life and the universe that ensues in the flowering of the disposition of holiness in the man of religion. The disposition may flow from *several* different visions of the kind mentioned above, even as the disposition to speak truth

may derive from several types of considerations psychological and moral, cognitive and affective. One may choose to be truthful because truthfulness has been enjoined by God or a Scripture; or, one may adopt truthfulness because one has learnt through experience that the telling of untruth leads to the emergence of certain undesirable tensions in the psychic personality. Likewise, several types of vision and outlook relating to life and the world may lead one to develop the attitude of detachment and the disposition of holiness in relation to the objects and persons in the world.

In a way every religion seeks to develop its own philosophical foundations. The philosophers of theistic religions have generally devoted their logical acumen to proving the existence of God. Having proved to their satisfaction the existence of a creator of the universe, they refer all other problems to the will or character of that Creator or God. The Nyāya philosophers, who present an elaborate conception of *Moksha* and also describe at length the mechanism and method whereby bondage may be dissolved, were compelled to go beyond proving God because of the background of classical Indian philosophies. The classical propagators of philosophic Hinduism can claim the honour of having been eminently rational because they aimed at achieving a rational understanding of the more significant aspects of religious life or the religious attitude. This rational understanding is closely allied to the possibility of empirical or experiential verification or comprehension. These remarks stand in need of elucidation. The founders of philosophic Hinduism seek, on the one hand, to construct, each in his own way, a picture or vision of the universe that would provide a rationale for the pursuit of the qualities of detachment and holiness. Thus, the Upanishadic Vedānta describes *Brahman*, which also constitutes the essential nature of each one of us, as being of the nature of pure awareness or witness consciousness, whose involvement in the world of objects is merely an appearance. This view of the nature of ultimate Reality directly leads to the formulation of the ideal of the *sthitaprajña,* who lives in the world more or less as a disinterested observer. While the Advaita Vedānta conceives the ultimate as an entity and names it, endowing it with such desirable traits as stability and bliss, the Mādhyamika refuses completely to characterize his ultimate Principle. More consistently than the Vedāntin he can declare: 'The Ultimate for the wise is silence (*Paramārtho hy āryāṇām tushṇīm-bhāvaḥ*)'. These

visions or descriptions of Reality are more satisfying than that of the theist for two reasons. First, the assumption of a creator God ruling the world despotically, involves reference to an entity not directly suggested by our experience. Secondly, theism makes the worth of the religious disposition and life depend on the arbitrary will or commandment of a being having no responsibility for or relationship with man's actual nature. On the contrary, philosophic Hinduism in its various forms establishes a direct relationship between our essential nature and the goal towards which our lives should be directed. Thirdly, it may be mentioned that the ultimate goal visualised by the classical Hindu philosophers is not altogether a matter of faith and a remote possibility; we can have a direct feel of that goal in this very life. In fact, it may be justifiably asserted that the concept of the ultimate, taken both in the sense of the Real and in that of the Goal or the Ideal, is reached by a sort of inverse deductive process such as is exemplified in the theorizing activity of the physical scientist. The process consists in the application of the familiar hypothetical-deductive method. Starting with the characteristic features of developed religious or saintly life as the given data, attempt is made to frame a conception of the Real that would both explain those features and make them seem desirable. The classical philosophers of religion seem to argue in effect in the following manner: The saint's attitude of detachment towards the mundane values is justified and worth emulation because the ultimate is distinctionless, or because it is of the nature of pure awareness, or else because the ultimate excludes the world of appearances wherein those values are located, etc. etc.

I have no intention of suggesting here that the conceptual constructions or visions of the ultimate as presented by the classical Indian philosophers have any compelling claim to be regarded as true or acceptable. Nor do I suggest that their perception of the essentials of religious or saintly life is in any sense complete and final. While admiring these philosophers or thinkers, all I am thinking of is the earnestness, strength and firmness of the purpose and the quest that lies behind their speculative endeavours. Part of this earnestness and strength derives from their serious commitment to the factual realities of religious life and attainments. If their philosophical constructions still seem to merit our attention and consideration, it is mainly because they still have a bearing on the facts associated with religious excellence as known to us.

The religious excellence of a person does not appear to us today to consist in uncritical, strict adherence to a particular faith or a set of beliefs. In so far as Christianity insists on such a faith, it is fast becoming more and more unacceptable to the modern man. The following extract from Julian Huxley correctly represents the attitude of the modern mind to doctrinaire Christianity :

> This system of (Christian) beliefs is quite unacceptable in the world of today. It is contradicted, as a whole and in detail, by our extended knowledge of the cosmos, of the solar system, of our own planet, of our own species and of our individual selves.
>
> Christianity is dogmatic, dualistic, and essentially geocentric. It is based on a vision of reality which sees the universe as static, short-lived, small, and ruled by a supernatural personal being. The vision we now possess, thanks to the patient and imaginative labours of thousands of physicists, chemists, biologists, psychologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, historians and humanists is incommensurable with it. In the light of this new vision, our picture of reality becomes unitary, temporally and spatially of almost inconceivable vastness, dynamic and constantly transforming itself through the operation of its own inherent properties. It is also scientific, in the sense of being based on established knowledge, and accordingly non-dogmatic, basically self-correcting, and itself evolving.[36]

Needless to say, the evolving scientific picture of the universe is incompatible with the descriptions of the world and its creation given in the various Hindu *Purāṇas* and other sacred works. The only difference is, as we have already observed, that philosophically inclined Hindus do not attach much importance to those descriptions. What Mr. James B. Pratt says of Buddhism is equally true of philosophic Hinduism. Speaking of the influence of science on the course of Buddhism Pratt observes :

> Buddhism is in no wise hostile to or inconsistent with modern science. But as to direct relations between Buddhism and methods or achievements of contemporary science, of these there are

[36] Ed. John Hick, *Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion* (Prentice Hall, N. J. 1964), Extract from Julian Huxley, p. 358.

> very few....The Buddha taught to his disciples not to speculate on matters that profit not, that do not tend to absence of passion, to quiescence, supreme wisdom, Nirvana. Following in the footsteps of his Master the ... Buddhist as a Buddhist has very little interest in modern scientific thinking.[37]

Speaking of Hinduism Mr. K. Natarajan remarks:

> The test of Hinduism is not in belief. Believing does not make a man a Hindu, nor does disbelief thrust him beyond the Hindu pale.[38]

As a matter of fact the importance of a religion today or at any time in future will be judged not by any factual doctrine about the universe that it happens to have adopted from a pre-scientifc age, but from its measure of comprehension of the realities of specifically religious life and values and its relevance in terms of those values.

The distinctive mark of the religious man is not his belief in a set of dogmas or even in a Creator God : there are religions and religious philosophies, such as Jainism and the Sāṅkhya, which do not share beliefs in the Creator and the creation of the world. The more important marks of the man of religion consist in his attitude towards the so-called temporal values and the living creatures including man. Negatively, the man of religion is characterized by indifference to or the attitude of detachment towards the competitive goods or values, e.g. wealth and power, and fame which is a form of power; positively, the religious person is seen to possess in a high degree the quality of overwhelming friendliness and compassion towards living beings in general and the fellow humans in particular.

Are these the only marks of the religious person? May the religious man be not permitted some exercise of his will and some form of activity touching on the fortunes of humanity on a larger scale ? I am inclined here to distinguish two types of temperament among the eminently religious personages. One type is predominantly saintly, the other is more active and so tends to assume the

[37] Ed. A. E. Haydon, *Modern Trends in World Religions*, (University of Chicago, 1934), "Buddhism and Modern Scientific Thinking," pp. 34, 35.

[38] "Hinduism and Modern Scientific Thinking," *ibid.*, p. 53

role of a leader of large communities. The first type is exemplified in the lives and personalities of such eminent figures in the religious history as St. Francis of Assissi and Swami Ramakrishna of Dakshineshwar. The second type is to be met with among religious leaders who have come to be looked upon as prophets. Moses and Jesus Christ, Buddha and Gandhi belong to this class of dynamic religious personalities.

Neither the Advaita-vedānta nor the various systems of Buddhism are able to offer sufficient metaphysical justification for the religious personalities of the second type. More than any Hindu system of philosophy Mahāyāna Buddhism lays emphasis on the life of active compassion, but *the emphasis is not deducible from its metaphysical schemes.* Probably the *Bhagavadgītā* is the only Indian text that stresses the importance of action undertaken in a disinterested spirit. According to it God himself becomes incarnate for the protection of the righteous against the unrighteous. But the *Bhagavadgītā* also describes and upholds the ideal of the *Sthitaprajña*. Nor does its metaphysical scheme lend any firm and clear support to the creed of activism. The concept of nonduality (*advaya*), indeed, is a lofty one, but it hardly yields a satisfactory solution of the problem of the relationship between our world of appearances and the Reality. Once a philosophy draws a sharp distinction between the realms of appearance and reality, it becomes difficult for it to establish a satisfactory relationship between life temporal and life eternal. This is the major shortcoming of the idealistic schemes of Plato, Śaṅkara and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

European culture has certainly had a more positive attitude towards spatio-temporal world and our life in it. However, the credit for the genesis and prevalence of this attitude cannot be claimed by Christianity. As we have already observed, Christianity can by no means be characterized as a philosophic religion. Its central teachings were given in the form of commandments and its votaries did not make any serious attempt either to derive or organize those teachings from and through rationally formulated principles. Christianity does not attempt to establish any intelligible connection between the essential nature of man and the course of conduct it recommends for him. On the one hand the *N. T.* extols poverty, vehemently asserting that a rich man can no more enter into the kingdom of God than a camel can go through the eye of a

needle. 'Blessed be ye poor : for yours is the kingdom of God' (Luke, VI. 20), it says. And further : 'He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' On the other hand heaven is generally equated with the abundant supply of the goods we enjoy here. Thus we read:

> . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and *all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matt. VI. 32-43)

These promises could have hardly satisfied an Indian *jijñāsu* like Nachiketas of the *Kaṭhopanishad.* As if to satisfy the spiritual demands of such persons the *N.T.* offers subtler descriptions too of the kingdom of heaven. The 'kingdom of God,' it says, 'is within you.'[39] And further: 'the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'[40] These conflicting statements can scarcely be welded into a coherent unity. In particular, the attitude of the *N.T.* towards the status of worldly life remains vague and uncertain.

European culture made a grand attempt to establish an organic relationship between the temporal and eternal orders in the philosophy of Hegel. However, that philosophy is too imaginative and speculative to satisfy the evidential demands of the modern mind conditioned by the triumphant career of the physical sciences on the one hand and by the positivistic trends of thought on the other. These trends require that our speculative reason be permitted to operate strictly within the limits clearly indicated by commonly available experience.

But the unconvincing and unacceptable character of the Hegelian metaphysics does not nullify the merit either of the speculative attempt he made or of the valuational perceptions or prejudices that conditioned or necessitated that attempt. These perceptions are the sort of factual data that philosophy is concerned to organize into unity. Hegel attempted to deduce from his metaphysical first principles, rules or criteria for estimating the worth of different institutions and practices, moral and socio-political, of different disciplines of knowledge and of different kinds of art works.

[39] Luke, XVII. 21.
[40] Ro., XIV. 17.

Whatever the degree of truth embodied in the principles, rules and criteria formulated by Hegel, there can be no doubt that they effected a broadly successful unification of the manifold perceptions, factual and evaluative, of the philosopher's contemporaries. Nor should it be supposed that Hegelian philosophy was either the first or the last European attempt to arrange the valuational phenomena in a hierarchical scale. The germs of a scheme indicating degrees of worth are present not only in the philosophy of Leibnitz but also in the systems of Plato and Aristotle. In fact, European culture owes its concern for organizing moral, socio-political and aesthetic experience in terms of rational concepts, categories and principles, primarily to the Greek thinkers. It was Greek culture that produced such immortal works on ethical and socio-cultural problems as the *Republic* of Plato and the *Ethica* of Aristotle. No works comparable to these in earnestness of intent and thoroughness of analysis were produced in India. The Greeks, in other words, seriously applied reason to their experience relating to moral and socio-political, aesthetic and other cultural matters including mathematics and history. In contrast to them, ancient Indian thinkers applied their rational energies mainly to the comprehension, explanation and interpretation of religious experience. As a consequence we find that the best work done by Indian thinkers relates to the field of religious values. This field was not seriously cultivated either by the Greek or the modern European philosophers. Due mainly to the anti-rational bias of Christianity the philosophic mind of Europe has grown allergic to religious values and problems. Mainly it is the theologians who seek to deal with these. I consider this to be a most unfortunate development in European culture. That culture may not hope to attain religious maturity, unless it permits free application of reason or philosophy to religious matters. Religious experience, indeed, constitutes in some respects the culminating point of a culture interpreted as the organized pursuit of the various sorts of values. The present speaker believes that the main and exclusive concern of philosophy are the values of different types, pursued and created by man. Inasmuch as religious values have been characteristic, throughout history, of the most gifted and revered leaders of humanity, neglect of those values is bound to impoverish and debase philosophy.

While Christianity laid exclusive emphasis on faith as the instrument of religious knowledge and salvation, Indian religious teachers

propounded the undemocratic but psychologically sound theory of grades of spiritual competence (*adhikārī-bheda*) thus recommending ritualistic religion for the lower grade people and reserving the higher forms of philosophic religion for the upper castes or the intellectual aristocracy. In the present age of growth of individualism and unbelief it does not seem possible to apply the principle of spiritual or even intellectual gradation either to persons or to groups. The expansion of higher education and man's increasing acquaintance with science and scientific methodology are other factors that militate against the acceptance of religious teachings by men as a matter of simple faith. Moreover, once a large section of the intelligentsia have learnt to discard authority and to test all sorts of pronouncements by reason and experience, the common people too tend to develop questioning attitudes towards authority. For these reasons I do not envisage an easy and secure future for such faith-centred creeds as Christianity and Vaishṇavism. The only religions that seem to me to have a future are such rational creeds as Buddhism and philosophic Hinduism.

While making this statement I do not for a moment suggest that the metaphysical schemes offered by ancient Buddhist and Hindu thinkers are all-inclusive and final truths. All I claim is that the *spirit* underlying the method and approach of those creeds has greater kinship with the rational and empirical temper of our age than the methods and approaches of the creeds based on prophetic teachings and revealed scriptures. As I have already observed, I do not concede the prevalence of any real conflict between experience and reason. The teachings of the Buddha, for instance, are closely related to man's psychological and moral experience; at the same time, the Buddha ever encouraged his disciples to test his teachings against reason. Never did the Buddha either ask or encourage his disciples to accept his teachings uncritically or without due reflection.

While I have expressed my pessimism about the future of some of the religions, I am not pessimistic about the future of religion or the religious values. I am not at all sure that there is an eternal order over and above the temporal order of life and the values known to us. The concept of eternity and the notion of an eternal order are, in my view, constructions of the human mind or the human imagination. This is not to say that the constructions are wholly fictitious and entirely without significance. Their popularity

with many a thinker of the ancient and medieval times attests their meaningfulness to man and his aspirations. On the one hand man involves himself energetically in the temporal order of existence, seeking to master and rearrange to his taste every detail of his historical environment; on the other he longs to transcend the limits imposed on him by his unruly passions and desires and the intractable socio-physical surroundings. Had man not been endowed with the faculty of imagination which impels him continually to look before and after and pine for what is not, probably many of the problems of science and history, many an aspiration of thought and action, including those associated with religion, would not have existed for him at all. However, since there seems to be no possibility of his getting rid of his characteristic imaginative restlessness, there is likely to be no abrupt end to man's religious quest in the foreseeable future.

But the future religion of man, as I can visualize it, is not likely to be centred in a naive faith in the supernatural. Like man's moral and aesthetic values and his social and political ideals, his religious values and ideals too will come progressively to be based on his growing acquaintance with the expressions of those values in the actual lives of his moral and spiritual heroes. Indeed, a conception of the religious life was already given by the Indian philosophers under such concepts as the *Sthitaprajña* and the *jīvan-mukta*. The *Bhagavadgītā* worked out the conception of the active saint, that had already been exemplified in the life of the half-historical, half-legendary figure of king Janaka. Maybe a slightly more positive and inclusive version of that ideal, worked out on a purely humanistic basis, will be acceptable to our own age as also to the coming ages.

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